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*The Best of*  
JOHN HENRY JOWETT



*The Best of*  
JOHN  
HENRY  
JOWETT

*Edited, with an Introduction by*  
GERALD KENNEDY



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS  
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THE BEST OF JOHN HENRY JOWETT

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FIRST EDITION

I-X

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# *Preface*

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The work on this volume was begun by reading everything Dr. Jowett had written. Deliberately, I did not read a biography or seek to gather anecdotes about the man. I wanted to meet him through his sermons, his meditations, and his prayers. It was an interesting experience and I commend it to others. Read a man and construct his biography from what he has written, for no man can help but be self-revealing in his speaking and writing. One finds himself asking, "What kind of man would preach this kind of gospel?" I arrived at a fairly accurate picture of this great preacher before learning details of his life and ministry.

I do not claim that the selections chosen for this book are necessarily the best. Many a reader will ask himself, "Why did he include this? How could he leave out that?" The answer is that here are the selections which appealed most to the editor at the time he was going through the material. The choices are personal choices and they reflect his prejudices and his preferences. But I do believe that the choices are representative and give a fair survey of the range and texture of Dr. Jowett's thought.

My thanks go to Mr. David Scott of Harper & Brothers for asking me to have a part in this series, and for his help in finding the Jowett books.

GERALD KENNEDY



# *Introduction*

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Those who want anything like a complete story of Dr. Jowett's life, will not be satisfied with the brief sketch which is to follow. The definitive life of this man, who was certainly one of the greatest of the modern preachers, was written by his friend Arthur Porritt.<sup>1</sup> The material which is set down here comes from that biography, and only enough of the facts and dates are set down to enable us to place him chronologically and to see him in his social and cultural setting.

John Henry Jowett was born August 25, 1863, in Yorkshire. He had a Christian home and his mother, in particular, seems to have influenced him profoundly. He was the fourth child and the third son. The family was Congregational and regular in its attendance at church. He always remembered the preaching of Dr. Mellor of the Square Church, Halifax, who was his minister during the days he was growing up. The minister was an able man who exerted a wide influence in the community. Though there was no personal relationship between Dr. Mellor and the reticent boy, the minister played a decisive part in leading him eventually into the ministry. There came a time when the young Jowett felt called to the law. He made his decision to enter the ministry instead, when a much loved and respected Sunday school teacher spoke of his disappointment, saying to him, "I had always hoped that you would go into the ministry." Who can ever tell what men and events make us what we are and inspire us to what we become?

Once the decision was made, Jowett became a student at a Congregational school, Airdale Academy. This was in 1882. After considering attending Glasgow University, he was persuaded to go to Edinburgh because a teacher told him that a raw Yorkshire lad needed polishing. Although he always considered himself an Edinburgh man, he attended Oxford from 1888 to 1889.

This was the time of theological storms. The controversy swept through England and was the forerunner of the Fundamentalist-Modernist struggle in America a few years later. Many of us who were in theological seminaries during the twenties and thirties, will remember the bitterness of the controversy here. What anguish of soul

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<sup>1</sup> Porritt, *John Henry Jowett*, George H. Doran, 1925.

many a young man suffered as he tried to find his way through the higher criticism without denying the faith of his fathers! Strangely enough, there is no indication that Jowett had any such experience. I have been unable to find any record of the young man being troubled theologically or actively participating in the heated debates of the day. That this reveals something about the man is probably true, but just what it reveals, is not too clear. Perhaps the whole conflict seemed to him beside the point and only secondary in significance. Jowett was never a man to enter into public debates as did, for example, his predecessor at Carr's Lane Chapel, Dr. R. W. Dale. Christianity to him was always something beyond argument. The simple, profound, personal experience of God's revelation in Jesus Christ apparently was never shaken by anything in the schools or in the world.

Most young men begin in small churches and know the difficulties of inadequate organizations. Not so Dr. Jowett. He was called to St. James Congregational Church in Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1888, and went to that pulpit on graduating. It was an influential church, with a seating capacity for over a thousand people. Many of the Congregational laymen in other places questioned the daring of such an important church calling such a young and inexperienced minister. But from the first Sunday, he preached to crowds. He warned his people that the first congregation was an exception, but he was wrong. From that first Sunday until his last Sunday in December of 1922 at Westminster Chapel in London, he never knew what it was to preach to small congregations. This, unfortunately, has not been the experience of most ministers. While at Newcastle, he was married to Lizzie A. Winpenny. Some years later, they adopted a daughter.

After serving at Newcastle for seven years, Jowett was called to one of the great Free Church pulpits of England—Carr's Lane Congregational Chapel in Birmingham. The death of Dr. R. W. Dale opened a pulpit having as great a preaching tradition as any in the country. It was as great a challenge as a man could face, and there are many who think that this was the making of Jowett. In some ways, he reached the height of his power here. His predecessor had become famous for his doctrinal preaching, and those who heard Jowett at Carr's Lane remember that through all of his preaching there ran the doctrinal theme of God's grace. Although he was a Liberal in politics, he never took the active part in political life of Birmingham which Dr. Dale had taken. Yet, he was loved by all the city, and when he left finally for America, the city leaders urged him with all the persuasion possible

to remain in the city. He was not only minister of a Congregational church, but he was also a first citizen of Birmingham.

The Digbeth Institute of Birmingham was a monument to Jowett's concern for the poor and underprivileged in the city. This was an institutional church, financed and managed by Carr's Lane Chapel. The money was raised by Jowett himself, and he had to drive himself to the task. He said that he was so poor at begging, that rich men took pity on him and gave him money for the Institute in order to relieve his embarrassment. As shall be pointed out later, there is little social gospel in Jowett's preaching, but Digbeth Institute stands as a symbol of his concern for all conditions of men.

Many honors came to him from his denomination. In 1906, he was made chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. In 1910, he was elected president of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches. Jowett was never too much at ease with individuals and there was nothing of the ecclesiastical politician about him. The high honors that were bestowed on him came as a general recognition of his worth and ability. He was at home in the pulpit, but he shrank from entering into discussion periods at the close of his lectures. He was not very happy about the American custom of subjecting Yale Lecturers to a courteous heckling. After he had spoken his word, he wanted to be let alone.

In 1911, he accepted a call to the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. He had been invited several times before he accepted, for he found it difficult to leave Carr's Lane. He became one of the greatest Protestant voices in America and Sunday after Sunday people were turned away because the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church was already full.

I have seen no documentary proof of this, but my impression is that Dr. Jowett had a growing homesickness for England. The war had a great deal to do with it, and he seems to have been greatly relieved when America entered the war on the side of his own nation. But after a time, he let it be known that he would give a call from an English pulpit every consideration. It looked at one time as if he would be called to the City Temple, but the call went to another man. There can be little doubt but that he was very much disappointed. When another great London pulpit called him, he accepted and went to Westminster Chapel in 1918, where he remained until his death.

Many of his friends felt that the war had deepened his message and given him a more tragic sense of life. He had the feeling that the future of the world depended on a world church. He became active in the

ecumenical movement and threw his influence into the strengthening of the bonds holding Christians together across national boundaries. There was in his last days almost a sense of what was going to happen to us unless the Church saved the day.

Dr. Jowett went as far as possible in church union. When he was in Birmingham, he had been criticized by some for participating in the welcoming reception of the new Anglican bishop. On February 15, 1920, he was invited to preach at Durham Cathedral. Since the time of the Commonwealth, no Nonconformist had preached in an English cathedral. Some thought it a great step forward and some were just as sure that it was of the devil. All kinds of threats were made if the sermon was preached. An Anglican clergyman caused a commotion just before the sermon by calling on the people to protest this profanation of the temple. The man was removed as quickly as possible and the sermon was preached. Apparently, no lasting harm was done.

Never a robust man and always having to guard his health and portion out his strength, Dr. Jowett spent the last year of his life in retirement. He died on the 19th of December, 1923. Because of his many books and his much writing in magazines and newspapers, he was one of the best-known preachers in the world. The King sent his sympathy to Mrs. Jowett, and from all communions there came words of appreciation for his life and his service.

Dr. Jowett always used a manuscript, yet those who heard him speak of his directness of speech. No one ever felt that some man was reading an essay in the pulpit. The overwhelming impression he made was of a direct word coming to each man's heart. This is but another example of how futile are rules for preaching. Generally speaking, it would seem to be impossible for a manuscript preacher to move his congregation as Jowett moved his. One man spoke of the almost unbearable sense of tension that came as he listened to him.

There is a finish and perfectness about Jowett's preaching that is obvious when one reads his sermons. The sentences are carefully organized and the words are chosen with artistry. When one reads the sermons one after another, it is discovered that he had certain favorite words and certain favorite expressions. This is true of all speakers. We escape giving the impression of repetition only because people have a long time to rest before they listen to us again. But in Jowett's case, there is remarkably little triteness. He has a good vocabulary and he has evidently taken pains to find the right word instead of being content with an approximation. The result is a tight literary construction

which makes good reading. Also, there is no feeling of padding or repetition, which so often is the impression of a more loose and rambling style.

The sermons were delivered in a conversational tone. There was nothing of the pompous, windy, pulpit tone, characteristic of certain pulpit orators of the past. If Jowett was fastidious and aristocratic, he was also a man of the common people when he spoke. He was a perfect example of plain speech in the mouth of the scholar, and plain men heard him gladly. There was never a lack of dignity on his part, and one could never think of Jowett doing anything cheap or vulgar. He had humor, but it was a reserved, almost an austere, humor. There was never the slightest doubt but that he was deadly serious and that his message was a matter of life and death. John Henry Jowett stands as a judgment on any modern preacher who endeavors to gain a cheap popularity by stooping to the melodramatic in his delivery, or who thinks he can reach men by talking the language of the gutter.

Another characteristic of Jowett's preaching is his clear organization. He divides his thought into three or four divisions and makes it quite clear when he moves from one point to another. No one could ever have been in doubt as to what he meant or what he was trying to convey. Even when he is writing very short homilies, he usually divides them into two parts. This, I am sure, is one of the reasons for his effectiveness. If a master like Jowett did not despise such a mundane thing as careful organization, we who are much lesser lights, had best not assume that we can do without it.

One of the lacks in Jowett's message is the social emphasis. He is talking to individuals, and you will read in vain for any prophetic pronouncements on the sins of society. Some have said he requested that all references to the social gospel should be removed from his written works. Others have said that he confessed a regret at the lack of this note in his preaching. However it may be, the emphasis is not present in the written remains of Jowett's preaching. His position is stated very clearly in his Yale Lectures:

*... I can clearly see this danger, that the broadening conception of the preacher's mission may lead to the emphasis of the Old Testament message of reform rather than to the New Testament message of redemption. Men may become so absorbed in social wrongs as to miss the deeper malady of personal sin. They may lift the rod of oppression and leave the burden of guilt. They may seek to correct social dislocations and overlook the awful disorder of the soul. It seems to me that*

*some preachers have made up their minds to live in the Old Testament rather than in the New, and to walk with the prophet rather than with the apostle and evangelist. Amazing differences are determined by a man's choice of central home; whether, say, he shall dwell in the gospel of John or in the Book of Amos, whether, say, in the wonderful realms of the epistle to the Ephesians, or in the smaller world of Isaiah or Jeremiah.<sup>2</sup>*

I imagine that our dwelling place is not only a matter of choice, but also a matter of temperament. But at any rate, we know where Jowett dwelt, and if the lack of social emphasis seems too important, let us remember also Digbeth Institute in the slums of Birmingham.

Jowett knew his Bible. Nothing I have read of his went very far astray from some Biblical word. His preaching was nearly always centered around a text, and much of it was expository. He decried the modern tendency to take topics and comment on them with a little scripture thrown in to give them a sermonic sound. He felt himself called to proclaim a Word which was embedded in the writings of an obscure tribe chosen of God to teach men the deep things about Him.

Jowett is not a literalist who felt called on to ring the changes on particular verses and chapters. He begins with the Bible and his message is always rooted in it, but his is a liberal spirit more concerned with the larger meanings than with the minutiae. The Bible has a word for life, but he never tries to make contemporary living subservient to an ancient code. He has a sense of the eternal nature of the Scriptures and so he is aware of their implications for every man every day. He does not retell Bible stories and incidents as ends in themselves, which is characteristic of so much Bible-centered preaching. The Bible was this preacher's Book, because it leads to Life.

He had the gift of finding a verse which illuminated a great idea. He took some of the verses in Paul's letters and unfolded them with such skill that they shine in a new light. One of his best books is a collection of short studies built around verses in the Psalms.<sup>3</sup> I do not see how any Christian can read these studies without having his imagination kindled and his spiritual life deepened. In some ways, Jowett was at his best when dealing with intimate, personal testimonies of what God does for individual men.

If the Bible was the first book in Jowett's preaching, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was second. As a matter of fact, when one takes Jowett

<sup>2</sup> Jowett, *The Preacher: His Life and Work*, Harper & Brothers, 1912, 80-81.

<sup>3</sup> Jowett, *Springs in the Desert*, Harper & Brothers, 1924.

in a concentrated form, one gets a little weary of the many references to *Pilgrim's Progress*. Whenever he is speaking of human experience, he can hardly escape mentioning what Christian did under similar circumstances in Bunyan's allegory. If this is a fault, it is certainly a minor one and would not have been noticed unduly by any but the most critical. If a man has to have favorite sources for his quotations, he could not do much better than choose these two favorites of Jowett.

Running all through the preaching of this man, there is an emphasis on the Gospel as comfort. In his Yale Lectures, he quoted with approbation Dr. Parker's words: "Preach to broken hearts!" and Ian Maclarens testimony, "The chief end of preaching is comfort." This emphasis is too often neglected in modern preaching and most of us can come back to the sense that the Gospel deals with each man's separate soul, with profit. We have tended to despise this understanding too much. There is not much food for the hungry spirits of men if they are confronted only with national sins.

This is particularly true today. The world is too much for us, and if any man has a word of encouragement and comfort, let it be spoken now. Most of us will discover that the sermons which seem to be the most helpful are those which heal the broken-hearted and comfort the sorrowful. Dr. Carl Patton used to say that the purpose of the sermon is to help people. When a man's pastoral ministry is maintained and he has gained the confidence of his people so that they share their burdens with him, he will know that Dr. Jowett's emphasis on comfort was not displaced.

When one reads the personal letters of Jowett, one is impressed with his sincere interest in other people's suffering. The personal element in his preaching was not in any sense a retreat from the more boisterous elements of social life. He did not preach comfort because he lacked courage to preach justice. But out of the tenderness of his own spirit, he knew how to weep with those who weep. With this sensitivity to the suffering of men, his mind was attracted to the texts which brought God's sympathy and comfort to them. He speaks time after time about the "wooing" of the Gospel. It is a word which often appears in his sermons, and he means by it the compelling tenderness of Jesus and the loving concern of God.

If I were to describe the deepest impression Jowett's sermons have had on me, however, it would be his sense of the Gospel as Good News. There kept coming back to me the word of William Taylor, later a Bishop in the Methodist church, but at the time I refer to a missionary in California. Standing on the street corners of San Francisco on Sun-

day mornings in the latter part of the nineteenth century, he would gather a crowd with his great shout, "What's the news?" Then he would begin to preach to those who came out of curiosity to see what this strange fellow had on his mind. "Thank God," he would say, "I have good news for you today." And John Henry Jowett, in Carr's Lane Chapel, or in Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, or in Westminster Chapel, created a great hopefulness with his assurance of the goodness of the message he had been called to proclaim.

This is something which every preacher ought to have, but it is also something which is very easy to lose. The preaching of many a man becomes only a heavy burden to him. He feels that he can only pronounce doom or make people aware of their shortcomings. All of this is a part of the message, it is true, but preachers need to be undergirded in everything they say with the wonderful truth that the Gospel is salvation and joy. Jowett knew men and their troubles, and he never doubted that when he could assure them that they were precious in the eyes of a seeking and forgiving God, it was the best news anyone could ever hear.

He was an evangelical preacher. If any man might have been tempted to preach only a sophisticated word to the intelligentsia, he was the man. But he never lost the sense of men needing to be saved from their sins, whether they were rich or poor. The Gospel was freedom from bondage and its glory was in its power to release men from the horror of it.

It was this sense of the Good News he was preaching that made him admire John Wesley so profoundly. A member of the Methodist church may well be accused of reading into this more than is justified, but the number of times Jowett uses Wesley as an illustration of what a Christian preacher ought to be, is striking. The two men had some other things in common, but most of all, they believed they had a word which could cleanse the heart of sin. The emphasis on religion as a thing of the heart was a congenial one to Jowett.

To put this in another way, he believed that the Gospel was the answer. It was not just *an* answer or one possible answer among many. It was *the* answer. After World War I, he felt it was the only answer to the world problem of peace. He was present at the Copenhagen World Conference of Christian Churches in 1922 and gave a notable ten-minute address which prevented the Conference from breaking up in disagreement. He believed that it was in the redeemed fellowship of the Church that hope was to be found.

When a man's sermons are read even a few years after they have

been delivered, everything that was trivial or unbalanced stands out with embarrassing clearness. Most of us reap little pleasure from reading over again last year's sermons. Therefore, when a preacher's writing stands up after the passing years and ministers to a new generation, it means that he went beneath the surface in his comprehension of the Christian faith. This is reason enough to bring together selections from his sermons and meditations in one volume. Besides that, it is always spiritually refreshing to get acquainted with a great Christian.



*The Best of*

JOHN HENRY JOWETT



# I. Sermons

---

## 1. THE DISCIPLE'S THEME<sup>1</sup>

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." EPH. 3:8.

Mark how the apostle describes the evangel—"the *unsearchable* riches of Christ!" It suggests the figure of a man standing, with uplifted hands, in a posture of great amazement, before continuous revelations of immeasurable and unspeakable glory. In whatever way he turns, the splendour confronts him! It is not a single highway of enrichment. There are side-ways, byways, turnings here and there, labyrinthine paths and recesses, and all of them abounding in unsuspected jewels of grace. It is as if a miner, working away at the primary vein of ore, should continually discover equally precious veins stretching out on every side, and overwhelming him in rich embarrassment. It is as if a little child, gathering the wild sweet heather at the fringe of the road, should lift his eyes and catch sight of the purple glory of a boundless moor. "The unsearchable riches of Christ!" It is as if a man were tracking out the confines of a lake, walking its boundaries, and when the circuit were almost complete should discover that it was no lake at all, but an arm of the ocean, and that he was confronted by the immeasurable sea! "The unsearchable riches of Christ!" This sense of amazement is never absent from the apostle's life and writings. His wonder grows by what it feeds on. Today's surprise almost makes yesterday's wonder a commonplace. Again and again he checks himself, and stops the march of his argument, as the glory breathes upon him the new freshness of the morning. You know how the familiar pæan runs. "According to the riches of His grace." "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory." "God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." "The riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles." "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." "In everything ye are enriched in Him." "The exceeding

<sup>1</sup> From *Passion for Souls*, Fleming H. Revell, 1905.

riches of His grace." His thought is overwhelmed. He is dazzled by the splendour. Speech is useless. Description is impossible. He just breaks out in awed and exultant exclamation. "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" The riches are "unsearchable," untrackable, "beyond all knowledge and all thought."

But now, to the Apostle Paul, these "unsearchable riches" are not merely the subjects of contemplation, they are objects of appropriation. This ideal wealth is usable glory, usable for the enrichment of the race. The "unsearchable riches" fit themselves into every possible condition of human poverty and need. The ocean of grace flows about the shore of common life, into all its distresses and gaping wants, and it fills every crack and crevice to the full. That is the sublime confidence of the Apostle Paul. He stands before all the desert places in human life, the mere cinder-heaps, the men and the women with burnt-out enthusiasms and affections, and he boldly proclaims their possible enrichment. He stands before sin, and proclaims that sin can be destroyed. He stands before sorrow, and proclaims that sorrow can be transfigured. He stands before the broken and perverted relationships of men, and proclaims that they can all be rectified. And all this in the strength of "the unsearchable riches of Christ!" To this man the wealth is realizable, and can be applied to the removal of all the deepest needs of men. Let us fasten our attention here for a little while, in the contemplation of this man's amazing confidence in the triumphant powers of grace.

*He stands before sin and proclaims its possible destruction.* It is not only that he proclaims the general ministry of pardon and the general removal of sin. He finds his special delight in specializing the ministry, and in proclaiming the all-sufficiency of redeeming grace in its relationship to the worst. There is about him the fearlessness of a man who knows that his evangel is that of a redemption which cannot possibly fail. Turn to those gloomy catalogues which are found here and there in his epistles, long appalling lists of human depravity and human need, and from these estimate his glowing confidence in the powers of redeeming grace. Here is such a list:—"Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with men, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners." Such were some of the foul issues upon which the saving energies of grace were to be brought. And then he adds—"And such were some of you. But ye were washed!" And when the Apostle uses the word "washed" he suggests more than the washing out of an old sin, he means the removal of an old affection; more than the removal of a pimple, he means the purifying of the blood; more than the cancelling of guilt, he means the transformation

of desire. Such was this man's belief in the saving ministry of divine grace. Do we share his confidence? Do we speak with the same unshaken assurance, or do we stagger through unbelief? Does our speech tremble with hesitancy and indecision? If we had here a company of men and women whose condition might well place them in one of the catalogues of the Apostle Paul, could we address to them an evangel of untroubled assurance, and would our tones have that savour of persuasion which would make our message believed? What could we tell them with firm and illumined convictions? Could we tell them that the cinder-heaps can be made into gardens, and that the desert can be made to rejoice and blossom as the rose? I say, should we stagger in the presence of the worst, or should we triumphantly exult in the power of Christ's salvation?

It has always been characteristic of great soul-winners that, in the strength of the unsearchable riches of Christ, they have proclaimed the possible enrichment and ennoblement of the most debased. John Wesley appeared to take almost a pride in recounting and describing the appalling ruin and defilement of mankind, that he might then glory in all-sufficient power of redeeming grace. "I preached at Bath. Some of the rich and great were present, to whom, as to the rest, I declared with all plainness of speech, (1) That by nature they were all children of wrath. (2) That all their natural tempers were corrupted and abominable. . . . One of my hearers, my Lord —, stayed very impatiently until I came to the middle of my fourth head. Then, starting up, he said, 'Tis hot! 'tis very hot,' and got downstairs as fast as he could." My Lord — should have stayed a little longer, for John Wesley's analysis of depravity and of human need was only and always the preface to the introduction of the glories of the unsearchable riches of Christ. My Lord — should have waited until Wesley got to the marrow of his text, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

There was a similar sublime confidence in the preaching of Spurgeon. What a magnificent assurance breathes through these words, "The blood of Christ can wash out blasphemy, adultery, fornication, lying, slander, perjury, theft, murder. Though thou hast raked in the very kennels of hell, yet if thou wilt come to Christ and ask mercy He will absolve thee from all sin." That too, I think, is quite Pauline. Henry Drummond has told us that he has sometimes listened to confessions of sin and to stories of ill-living so filthy and so loathsome that he felt when he returned home that he must change his very clothes. And yet to these plague-smitten children Drummond offered

with joyful confidence the robe of righteousness and the garment of salvation. We need this confident hope to-day. Men and women are round about us, will-less, heartless, hopeless, and there is something stimulating and magnetic about a strong man's confident speech. If we proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, let us proclaim them with a confidence born of experimental fellowship with the Lord, and with the untrembling assurance that the crown of life can be brought to the most besotted, and the pure white robe to the most defiled.

What else does Paul find in the unsearchable riches of Christ? *He finds a gracious ministry for the transfiguration of sorrow.* The unsearchable riches of Christ bring most winsome light and heat into the midst of human sorrow and grief. "Our consolations also abound through Christ." Turn where you will, in the life of Paul, into his darker seasons and experiences, and you will find that the sublime and spiritual consolation is shedding its comforting rays. "We rejoice in tribulations also." Who would have expected to find the light burning there? "We sorrow, yet not as others who have no hope." "Not as others!" It is sorrow with the light streaming through it! It is an April shower, mingled sunshine and rain; the hope gleams through tears. The light transfigures what it touches! Even the yew tree in my garden, so sombre and so sullen, shows another face when the sun-light falls upon it. I think I have seen the yew tree smile!

Even pain shows a new face when the glory-light beams upon it. Said Frances Ridley Havergal, that exultant singing spirit, with the frail, shaking, pain-ridden body, "Everybody is so sorry for me except myself." And then she uses the phrase, "I see my pain in the light of Calvary." It is the yew tree with the light upon it! Such is the ministry of the unsearchable riches in the night-time of pain. Professor Elmslie said to one of his dearest friends toward the end of his days, "What people need most is comfort." If that be true, then the sad, tear-stricken, heavy-laden children of men will find their satisfaction only in the unsearchable riches of Christ.

What further discoveries does the Apostle make in the unsearchable riches of Christ? He not only confronts sin and claims that it can be destroyed, and stands before sorrow and claims that it can be transfigured, *he stands amid the misunderstandings of men*, amid the perversions in the purposed order of life, the ugly twists that have been given to fellowships which were ordained to be beautiful and true, *and he proclaims their possible rectification in Christ.* When Paul wants to bring correcting and enriching forces into human affairs, he seeks the wealthy energy in "the unsearchable riches of

Christ." He finds the ore for all ethical and social enrichments in this vast spiritual deposit. He goes into the home, and seeks the adjustment of the home relationships, and the heightening and enrichment of the marriage vow. And by what means does he seek it? By bringing Calvary's tree to the very hearthstone, the merits of the bleeding sacrifice to the enrichment of the wedded life. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." He goes into the domain of labour, and seeks the resetting of the relationships of master and servant. And by what means does he seek it? By seeking the spiritual enrichment of both master and servant in a common communion with the wealth of the blessed Lord. He takes our common intimacies, our familiar contracts, the points where we meet in daily fellowship, and he seeks to transform the touch which carries an ill contagion into a touch which shall be the vehicle of contagious health. And by what means does he seek it? By bringing the Cross to the common life and letting the wealth of that transcendent sacrifice reveal the work of the individual soul. Everywhere the Apostle finds in the "unsearchable riches of Christ" life's glorious ideal, and the all-sufficient dynamic by which it is to be attained. Here, then, my brethren, are the "unsearchable riches" of Christ—riches of love, riches of pardon, riches of comfort, riches of health, riches for restoring the sin-scorched wastes of the soul, riches for transfiguring the sullenness of sorrow and pain, and riches for healthily adjusting the perverted relationships of the home, the state and the race. These riches are ours. Every soul is heir to the vast inheritance! The riches are waiting for the claimants! And some, yea, multitudes of our fellows have claimed them, and they are moving about in the humdrum ways of common life with the joyful consciousness of spiritual millionaires. One such man is described by James Smetham. He was a humble member of Smetham's Methodist class-meeting. "He sold a bit of tea . . . and staggered along in June days with a tendency to hernia, and prayed as if he had a fortune of ten thousand a year, and were the best-off man in the world!" His "bit of tea" and his rupture! But with the consciousness of a spiritual millionaire! "All this," said the old woman to Bishop Burnett, as she held up a crust, "all this and Christ!" These are the folk who have inherited the promises, who have even now inherited the treasures in heaven: and "unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, to preach these unsearchable riches of Christ."

Let me turn, in conclusion, from the disciple's theme to the preacher himself. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints." Then the

disciple is possessed by a sense of profound humility. "Unto me"—the standing amazement of it, that he should have been chosen, first, to share the wealth, to claim the inheritance, and then to make known his discovery to others. "Unto me, who am less than the least"—he violates grammar, he coins a word which I suppose is used nowhere else. It is not enough for Paul to obtain a word which signifies the least, he wants a place beneath the least—"unto me, who am less than the least"—such a word does he require in order to express his sense of his own unworthiness. "Less than the least." He gazes back; surely I don't misinterpret the Apostle when I say it—he gazes back upon the days of his alienation, upon the days when he was deriding and scorning the supposed riches of his Master's kingdom. Again and again, in places where I least expect it, I find the Apostle turning a powerful and, I think, pain-ridden gaze into those early days when he lived in revolt. If you turn to Romans 16, that collection of miscellanies, a chapter which I suppose we don't often read, which is concerned largely with salutations and the courtesies of common life, you get here and there most vivid glimpses into the consciousness of the Apostle. Here is one: "Salute Andronicus, and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners who were in Christ before me." Do you feel the sob of it—"who were in Christ before me"? They were serving Him, following Him, proclaiming Him, while I was still a declared and implacable foe; they were in Christ before me. But unto me, less than Andronicus, less than Junia, and less than the least of all, unto me was the grace given. I think we shall have to share with him—this sense of unworthiness at being called and elected by grace to preach the Gospel. We shall have to enter into controversy even with the old Puritan who said, "I do not quarrel with Paul's language, but I do dispute his right to push me out of my place." "Less than the least," said the Puritan, "is my place." Surely the preacher must sometimes lay down his pen, and pause in the very middle of his preparation, in a sense of extreme wonderment that the condescending Lord should have chosen him to be the vehicle and messenger of eternal grace. The man who feels unworthy will be kept open and receptive towards the fountain. "Why did Jesus choose Judas?" said an inquirer once to Dr. Parker. "I don't know," replied the Doctor, "but I have a bigger mystery still. I cannot make out why He chose me." "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints was this grace given." I wish I could just read that in the very tone and accent in which I think the Apostle himself would have proclaimed it. I think the early part of it would have to be read almost

tremblingly. Mark the mingling of profound humility with the tone of absolute confidence. When the Apostle looked at himself he was filled with shrinkings and timidities, but when he thought about his acceptance and his endowment he was possessed by confident triumph. Whatever shrinking he had about himself, he had no shrinking that he was the elect of God, endowed with the grace of God, in order to proclaim the evangel of God. It was just because he was so perfectly assured of his acceptance and of his vocation that he felt so perfectly unworthy. Did not Cromwell say of George Fox that an enormous sacred self-confidence was not the least of his attainments? I am not quite sure that Oliver Cromwell correctly interpreted George Fox. I would be inclined to withdraw the word "self" and insert the word "God," and then we have got, not only what George Fox ought to be, but what the Apostle Paul was, and what every minister of the Gospel is expected to be in Christ; we are expected to be the children of an enormous God-confidence, we are to be children absolutely assured that we are in communion with Christ, and are even now receptive of His grace.

"Unto me was the grace given." Without that grace there can be no herald, and without that grace there can, therefore, be no evangel. You have heard the old legend of the noble hall, and the horn that hung by the gate waiting for the heir's return; none could blow the horn except the heir to the noble pile. One stranger after another would come and put the horn to his lips, but fail to sound the blast. Then the heir appeared, took the horn down from the gate, blew it, and there came the blast that rang down the valley and wound round the hills. "Unto me was the grace given" to blow the horn; "unto me was the grace given" to preach; and none but the one who has the grace of the heir can blow the horn of the Gospel. Our main work, our supreme work, our work, before which all other pales and becomes dim, is to tell the good news, to go everywhere, letting everybody know about the unsearchable riches of Christ. When Professor Elmslie was dying, he said to his wife, "No man can deny that I have always preached the love of God"; and just before he died he said again, "Kate, God is love, all love. Kate, we will tell everybody that, but especially our own boy—at least, you will—we will tell everybody that; that's my vocation." That is the vocation of the disciple, to tell everybody of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

## 2. PLOUGH-WORK<sup>1</sup>

"And Jesus said, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." LUKE 9:62.

"His hand to the plough!" The Master did not use the figure heedlessly. It was not one of a hundred possible figures, any one of which would have served His purpose as well as the others. It was carefully chosen, to express the emphasis of the immediate need. "His hand to the plough!" The plough-work of the Kingdom! Ploughing is the heaviest work in the toil of the field. Sowing the seed is a comparatively easy ministry; by the side of ploughing it is a time of recreation. Reaping is associated with warmth and triumph, and is pervaded with the light-hearted song of the harvest-home. But ploughing is heavy, laborious work; it is concerned with the disturbance of the commonplace, the breaking up of the hard, familiar surface, the pulverising and loosing of the impermeable mass, and the exposing of the hidden depths of the light and air and dews and rains of the upper world. Ay, ploughing is a strenuous labour, primary and fundamental. And so it is in the Kingdom of God. Sowing the seed may demand no shedding of blood: it may be as unexacting as the telling of a pleasant story, or a cheery conversation by the fire-side. But to drive your share through the conventional, to overturn the traditional, to pulverise a hard and hoary custom, to break up the popular and well-trodden expediency, to expose the subsoil of a commonplace, to disturb the superficialities and externalities of human life, and to bring to bear upon the hidden depths the light and air and moisture of heaven—all this is labour demanding bloody sweat, the heaviest work in the Kingdom of God. You may drop a seed upon the way-side, it will do no harm, but touch the common ground with your plough, and there are ten thousand guardians of the traditional, massed together in the common resistance of change. There seems to be a deep

<sup>1</sup> From *The Transfigured Church*, Fleming H. Revell, 1910.

conservative streak in everybody, and instinctively we linger fondly upon the old—the old home, despite its inconveniences and its smaller rooms, the old hymn-book, the old form of service, the old way in the office—a fond clinging to the venerable, and I think the adhesion is frequently legitimate, healthy and good. But that same conservatism is frequently found buttressing an abuse, and it is often our passionate dislike of a change and disturbance which constitutes the strongest enemy of progress. There is a familiar saying in Yorkshire that the more you disturb a rubbish heap the ranker is the offence, and the proverb is always quoted in defence of the stationary, and in opposition to any policy of advancement. Now the ploughshare is the minister of change, of disturbance, of upheaval, and the heavenly ploughman is confronted by ten thousand massed antagonisms which invest his labour with all the dignity of a chivalrous crusade. Plough-work is therefore very heavy work, pioneer work, often very lonely work, and, taken altogether, the most exacting work in the Kingdom of God. “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”

Who were these disciples to whom these warning words were spoken? None of them were men of recognised culture, or of wealth, or of conspicuous rank. But, once settled down to their work, they proved themselves to be men of masculine handgrip, of magnificent tenacity of purpose, who, once they had begun upon a field, would see the furrow through. And to what unpromising stretches of land they had to turn their plough! Just think of two or three of the iron-bound fields to which the early apostles had got to put their hands. There was the field of Jewish traditionalism. Why, it was like trying to plough a field of brass. It had been made hard and unreceptive by the formalisms of a score of generations, and it wore the superficial sheen of a shallow and polished Pharisaism. No harder field has the ploughman of the Kingdom ever faced. And yet to this field he must direct his plough; he must turn up the subsoil of its formal and legalised life, he must pulverise its prejudices, and he must expose its innermost and better depths to the fertilising ministry of God’s redeeming grace. What a work it was! What a terrific disturbance it involved! The ploughman who attempts it shall be beaten with the flail from his own threshing-floor. “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

And there was the field of Grecian æstheticism. Think of Athens as a sphere for the Christian ploughman. You have refinement, you have accomplishments, you have a stately and luxurious ease, but you

have no healthy, bounding vitality in the secret depths of the life. At this time Athens was not a living heart, but a polished stone. And to this field the ploughman of the Kingdom had to come, with his ministry of upheaval, turning up the deeper self, stirring up the deeper hunger and the deeper thirst. And the ploughman came, and he came of an inferior people, and from a distant and obscure province, and he drove his share into the benumbed life of this astonished people. Astonished? Yes, as princes and elders were astonished in Bethel, when the herdman Amos came from the hamlet Tekoa, and drove the share of prophetic warning into their soddened and luxurious life; astonished, as Sir Philip Warwick and many others were astonished, when a farmer named Oliver Cromwell came from Huntingdon, and stood amid the refinements of the English Parliament, stood there, "in a plain cloth suit, made by an ill country tailor," and spake to the assembled representatives "with voice sharp and untunable, but with eloquence full of fervour." So came there a ploughman to hard and polished Athens, "one whose bodily presence was weak and contemptible," but who, in the strength of the Spirit of God, drove his awakening evangel into the very depths of her secret need.

And there was the field of Roman materialism. What a piece of land for the plough—hardened by power, by wealth, by pomp, by victory! And there came a ploughman! He came along the Appian way, but, as if to make his weakness still more manifest, he came not as a freeman, but in the custody of an Imperial guard. And yet he came to plough! The conjunction is tremendous—this aged ploughman with bent back, but with alert and eager spirit, coming to plough his furrow through the amazing antagonisms of Imperial Rome. And he ploughed it, and the influence of that upheaval enriches the life of England to-day.

But we need not go back to apostolic times in order to discover heavy fields and fine ploughmen. Later times have been glorified by the presentation of equally burdensome opportunities, and by the possession of equally heroic and determined men. I think of Henry Martyn, that brilliant Cambridge Wrangler, grasping the coveted honours of his beloved University, and yet strangely hungry in the hour of his academic triumph. "I was surprised to find that I had grasped a shadow!" Ah, but it was a surprise of grace, a blessed disappointment inspired by the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it," and the coveted glory fades like the withered grass. It was a gracious disillusionment, for Henry Martyn's eyes were now

lifted far above scholastic prizes to the all-satisfying “prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Having gazed upon the glory of the Lord his eyes were washed to discern the vastness of the Lord’s untilled and fruitless fields, and he turned his consecrated life to India. What a field to plough! Read Amy Carmichael’s saddening and yet inspiring book on “Things as they are in India.” Oh, the cold, chilling, rainy desolation of it all! Oh, the cruelty, the heartbreak, the cryless, soaking sorrow, the unconsoled and hopeless pain! Things were no better in Henry Martyn’s time, and it was to this dark, heavy, soddened field that this young University man turned the point of his share. He put his hands to the plough, and with that immortal word upon his lips which expressed both vow and prayer, “Now, let me burn out for God!” he began his lonely work. Henry Martyn is worth thinking about if you want a companion in the heroic life. He ploughed away at the furrow, ploughed away, and even when illness came, and the sentence of death was in him, and his friends beseeched him to come home and rest, “he could not bear the idea of completely abandoning the work,” to which he had given his life, and “so he went to Persia that he might revise his Persian New Testament among the very people for whom it was prepared.” No “looking back” from the plough! No relinquishing the handles even for a holiday! Ay, and we, too, have got a living ploughman whom we cannot entice home for a holiday! We have cooeyed to him, we have hallooed to him, but Griffith John away in China moves on in the furrow! We would shower our honours on him, but he just gratefully smiles in the midst of the hopeful field. The Chairmanship of the Congregational Union was offered to him, and he quietly replied, “Send me out more ploughmen!” These are the men who preserve the race from degeneracy and putrefaction. They are “the salt of the earth.”

I think of James Gilmour. I think of the wild, far-stretching field to which he addressed his unaccompanied life. Get the size of the field. Mongolia stretches from the Sea of Japan on the east to Turkestan on the west, a distance of three thousand miles, and from the southern boundary of Asiatic Russia to the great wall of China, a distance of nine hundred miles. Into that mighty field put down a single man and let him attempt single-handed the heavy work of evangelising it for Christ. Again, I say, “What a field!” and again I say, “What a ploughman!” I greatly like that first entry in his diary when he had just got his share in the uncut field: “Astir by daybreak. Made porridge and tea.” (How like John Tauler, the mystic, in its combination of

homely duty and sublime task!) "Made porridge and tea. Several huts in sight." (Do you feel the thrill of that? These few huts, the fringe of the field, the beginnings of the three thousand miles!) "Several huts in sight. Oh, let me live for Christ, and feel day by day the blessedness of a will given up to God." And so he ploughed away, and in unthinkable loneliness. "My eyes have filled with tears frequently these last few days in spite of myself! Oh, the intense loneliness of Christ's life! He bore it! O Jesus, let me follow in Thy steps." In after days was there much to cheer him in the furrow he had cut? "In the shape of converts I have seen no results. I have not, as far as I am aware, seen any one who even *wanted* to be a Christian." He writes again: "Oh, if things would only move!" How then? Did he turn back? Oh, no, he never looked back! He found his sufficiency in his Saviour, and he died in the furrow. In one of his last letters to his brother he wrote, "In Jesus is all fulness. Supply yourself from Him. Heaven's ahead, brother. Hurrah!" I know of no more heartening word in missionary literature than this "Hurrah!" from this much worn ploughman, cutting his day's furrow in the tremendous field of Mongolia.

Well, we are not out in Mongolia, in India, or among the islands of the South Seas: but can we do anything to help the man at the plough? Let me tell you. There was a man in our own country who put his hands to a piece of difficult and obnoxious work. James Stansfield was a member of the Liberal Ministry, and for many years represented my native town. He resigned his place in the Cabinet that he might take up the honourable but unpopular cause of restoring honour to the degraded womanhood of our land. It was a tremendous task, exposing him to the opprobrium and contumely of his fellows, and for many years "he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." But my purpose just now is to say that when he was delivered from Cabinet discipline, and made his first appearance, pale and nervous, in the Colston Hall at Bristol, he passed a little note along the platform to Mrs. Josephine Butler, and on the note were these words: "I am so thankful for the women's prayers." Was not that strengthening the ploughman? David Hill, the Methodist missionary in China, once wrote in his diary, "I feel very buoyant this morning"—shall we say he was whistling at the plough—"I feel very buoyant this morning: somebody must be ardently praying for me at home!" Yes, it is true. By prayer we can establish the hands of the distant ploughman; you and I can know "the fellowship of His sufferings," and, in the bonds of Holy Communion you and I and

the far-off ploughman can even now meet together at the mercy-seat of God.

But there is plough-work needed nearer home. Here in our own land there is hard and intractable ground to be broken up. This hard, unpromising ground is not the peculiar characteristic of any one particular class of people. There are the masses of the poor, hardened by the winter of their discontent, or partially petrified by a still more perilous indifference. Their life is trodden and crushed by the iron feet of poverty and by a multitude of petty cares. And the work of the Lord's ploughman is just this—to turn up the subsoil, to lift the buried self into the light, to bring their hidden potencies under the marvellous influences of God's redeeming grace. Hard work for the ploughman? Ay, heart-breaking work! And there are the classes, hardened by the bright and lengthy summer of their opulence. The ground of their life is baked hard by their continued noon. The ploughman who undertakes this work must have a firm hand and a stout heart. A book was recently published entitled "Seven Years' Hard." It describes the arduous ministry of a worthy ploughman who drove his share for seven years through the field of a London slum. I wish some one would give us a book on plough-work among the suburbs, among the privileged fields of the well-to-do. I can imagine that such a story would have to be written in blood. But be that as it may, to go to rich or poor, be they hardened by luxury or by want, and seek to upheave the sub-soil in both—the deeper, better, buried self—is the work of the Lord's ploughman, and is a most Christly thing.

*Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,  
Feelings lie buried, which grace can restore.*

But away from the individual life of the people, in the common and corporate life, there is also plough-work to be done. What upheavals are demanded in the commonwealth! And yet it is burdensome and exhausting work. Any man who puts his hand to the plough in the field of social reform will find that he has to encounter a rigid and frigid conservatism. I do not use the word with a political significance, but to express that multiplicity of iron-bound traditions and of vested interests which permeate the soil of the common life like wire entanglements, and which fetter and embarrass the progress of the reforming plough.

What, then, shall the ploughman do in his slow, disappointing and laborious work? Shall he turn back, and leave his idle share to rust?

Shall he leave the rich and the poor, with their manifold indifference, and shall he leave the great broad field of possible social redemption; shall he leave his Sunday school class, and those two or three feet of furrow which he has cut in an obscure place: and shall he hie him away home, and shelter himself in cushioned ease? "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God!" Ay, that is the peril of the heavenly ploughman, the danger of "looking back." Get your imagination upon the figure. It is the figure of a man who has got his hands upon the plough, but who has lost the forward cast from his eyes. He is trying to go forward while looking backward. He is seeking to embody the spirit of progress while he hugs the vision of retrospect. He is going one way and looking another! Now, that cannot last. The Master says such prospects are disabling. They unfit a man for the work of the Kingdom of God. And for this reason, that ultimately one's goings are determined by one's lookings. In the long run, we turn our feet in the direction of our gaze. The ploughman, who begins to look backward, first of all spoils his work and cuts a crooked furrow, and then he turns away from the work he has spoiled. It matters not what it is that deflects the vision—whether it is that we are dismayed by the difficulties that confront us, and we turn a lingering and covetous glance to the ease we have left behind: or whether, like Demas, we are seduced by the glittering prizes of this world, and we lose the fascination of the golden crowns of the ripened ears; or whether we are tired of being alone in the furrow, and we seek the genial company of the vast and idle crowd. I say it matters not what deflects our forward vision, the backward look begins the backward turning, and hastens our disendowment in the Kingdom of God. "We are saved by hope"; yes, and we save by hope, we cut our furrow in hope, we work for the harvest in hope, in the power of a long and forward-cast expectancy, and "no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God," for the work of the Kingdom he can never do.

What, then, is to be the inspiration of the ploughman? He must be moved by more than impulse, for the freshness and ecstasy may pass, and leave him sad and forlorn. His constraint must be more than an ideal, for some day the ideal may mock and chill him with the impossibility of its own attainment. No, to a higher inspiration still must the ploughman turn, even to the unfailing companionship of the ever faithful Lord. There need be no lonely furrow. Drive in thy share; thy Lord is with thee; with thee in the very strength of thine

arm, and in the very purpose and vision of thine heart. And if there is any man or woman, some fellow-labourer of the Lord, who is now standing doubting in the furrow, the unfinished furrow, and looking back, let me urge such to set their hands to the work again, and fix their heart upon the steadyng fellowship of the Christ. And when all is over, and “curfew tolls the knell of parting day,” and the tired ploughman “homeward plods his weary way,” it shall once again be told in the fair abode of light how a full day’s work has led to the grander labours of the eternal rest.

### 3. THROUGH GETHSEMANE TO OLIVET<sup>1</sup>

"Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of Him." MATT. 20:20.

"Then came!" And what was the particular time which was assumed to be so favourable to the quest? What was the psychological moment? What says the context, for the context so frequently sheds a lurid or interpreting light upon the text? "And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples apart, and on the way He said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify; and the third day He shall be raised up." The narrative is darkening into twilight and night; the heavens are becoming overspread and there loom the approaching presences of betrayal and condemnation and crucifixion. Surely, in such awful midnight, all petty and frivolous thought will be upheaved as by the convulsions of an earthquake! Surely, all trifling purposes will be enlarged by a solemn wonder! Surely, all hot and feverish ambition will be cooled and transfigured into sacred pity and awe! "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons . . . asking a certain thing of Him." In the moment of austere sorrow private ambition became obtrusive! We must not assume that these men and their mother had been unimpressed by the Master's sad and mysterious speech. I would rather assume that they have shared the general depression, and have been subdued into tender seriousness and tears. But would not the assumption make the association altogether violent and unnatural? Natural or unnatural, I find many interpreting analogies in my own experience. It is amazing how speedily a settled temper can stain through a new impression and obliterate it. It is marvellous with what strength a dominant purpose

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<sup>1</sup> From *The School of Calvary*, James Clarke & Co. Ltd.

can break through a temporary emotion and subdue and destroy it. How often laughter walks just at the heels of tears! How frequently frivolity pitches its tents in the very precincts of the sanctuary! It is almost incredible what subjects men can discuss when they are returning from a funeral. We gaze into a cold grave, and the wells of emotion are all at the flow, but within thirty minutes our thoughts have regained detachment, and our speech is busy with private or public affairs. Our minds and hearts can be deeply ploughed by the sharp, powerful share of public worship, but, almost before we reach the doors of the sanctuary, the drifting sands of the world are about us again, and the furrows are filled and obscured. I am not launching an indictment; I am only illustrating an apparently violent conjunction. The old association has its modern analogies, and I am therefore not surprised that this sad and burdensome saying of the Lord should be immediately linked with the request of selfish and vaunting ambition. "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons . . . asking a certain thing of Him."

Now, who were the petitioners? Matthew records that the petition was offered by the mother. In the Gospel of Mark, James and John are reported as making the appeal. The probability is that all three engaged in the supplication, and what one seemed to lack in urgency was supplied by the others. It does not require a fanciful imagination to recreate some of the preliminary conditions which preceded this open request. The incident here narrated is the culmination of a plot; it is the efflorescence of assiduous culture. Behind this public stage there are domestic conspiracies which it is not difficult to recall. Salome and her two sons, James and John, have often discussed the sons' prospects in the coming kingdom, and many a time, at the end of a day's fellowship with the Master, they have sat late into the night, and even to the cock-crow, considering eligible places in the new dominion. "You are not half pushing enough," said Salome to her brawny fisherman sons: "your hesitancy will be your undoing! Your silence will be misinterpreted, your very reserve will be counted as indifference! Hangers-back will be regarded as hangers-on, and in the day of dignities you will be nowhere near the throne! There's Peter, now, he is never far away from the front, and I've seen the Master cast many a favouring eye upon him! And Nathaniel, too, seems to be deep in His confidence, for often have I marked them in long and serious conversation! Judas has even received preliminary office, for already he has been appointed treasurer to the growing band! And then there's Matthew, a skilled man of affairs, with expert under-

standing of many things, and versed in the ways and mysteries of government! There are a dozen available men, and available offices will not be plentiful, and men like Judas will lose nothing for the asking. Pluck up, my sons, and assert your eagerness!" And so these two sons often retired to rest, with purpose matured, with their decision made, and they fell asleep dreaming of principalities and powers and exalted offices next to a throne. But in the cooler morning reserve returned, and the flowing purpose congealed again into rigid reluctance. And I cannot but think that oftentimes they sought to throw the task upon their mother, urging that such a request would come with far more force from her. "No one can compete with your influence," they said: "you are sister to Mary, His mother, and you can reckon upon her support, and you can prefer the claims of blood!" And so, day after day, the conversation would be renewed, and day after day the petition was delayed. But now Jerusalem was coming into sight, the centre of sovereignty and power, where the throne would be established, and the Master's face was set so steadfastly towards it. "It must be now or never," said Salome, "and it shall be now!" "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons, worshipping Him, and asking a certain thing of Him. And He saith unto her, What wouldst thou? She saith unto Him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand, in Thy kingdom."

And, now, let us reverently note the yearning pathos of the Saviour's reply. "And Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask!" There is little or no rebuke in speech or tone. There is no indignant retort that they are asking amiss; there is only a graciously tender answer that they do not know the content of their own request. He assumes that what they are seeking is near companionship in His sovereignty, and very gently He intimates that they cannot have counted the cost. "Ye ask for sovereignty alongside me, that ye might share in my dominion; ye know not what is involved in such sovereignty: ye know not what ye ask! Ye think ye are asking for a garden, but in reality ye are asking for a battlefield, for my gardens are just transformed battlefields, and every owner of a garden has been a warrior on the field. Ye know not what ye ask!"

That is the principle of the Master's teaching. Men ask for exalted summits, as though they were the immediate gift of the Saviour's hand, and they are reached by hard and toilsome roads. The teaching is illustrated upon many planes of desire, apart from the distinctly religious. "Grant that I may stand upon Mount Olivet, my feet rest-

ing at the very secret place of its uplifted and radiant splendour!" Ye know not what ye ask: the fatigue, the toil, the danger, which characterise the road that leads to it. "Grant that I may have the wondrously facile skill of some great instrumentalist, that with perfect ease I may weave and fashion rich and moving harmonies! Let me sit upon the throne of the musical world!" Ye know not what ye ask! the sleepless vigilance, the uncheered rehearsals, the aching drill and discipline; musical sovereignties are reached by very obscure and toilsome stairs. It is not otherwise when we reason in the realm of the spiritual. "Grant that we may sit with Thee on Thy throne!" In this high region dignities are not doled, nor are laurels distributed to every caller at the gate. In the army of the Lord promotion is not by patronage: it is the gracious heritage of fidelity. We do not wing our way to crowns and sovereignties; step by step we trudge to them. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler." "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom."

"Ye know not what ye ask!" Ye are seeking for sovereignties—for moral conquests, for spiritual dominions, for some splendid royalty of the soul: "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" "Between you and a share in the sovereign glories of my kingdom there is a cup to be drunk; are ye able?" Our Saviour is using a very familiar figure in this of the cup, for a man's cup was just the essential nature of the man's particular lot. A man's cup might be sweet or bitter, good or ill, seized and quaffed with ready delight or drunk with sad reluctance. "Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over!" And that is a cup we all covet to share. But these are not the draughts that form the mighty cordials of the soul, and endow it with spiritual force and sovereignty. "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" Can you share my present lot, my sacrifice in thought, in prayer, in compassion and service? Will you share a night upon the hill in ceaseless intercession? Will you weep with me in Gethsemane, and bear upon your burdened hearts the sins and sorrows of the world. Will you enter into the bitter lots of others, and share their unwelcome draught? You ask for a conquest: well, then, are you ready for a crusade? That is the clarion call of the Lord. We are not called to easy sovereignties but to glorious campaigns. That is one of the primary significances of the emblems which lie upon the table at the Lord's Supper. They are the memorials of a superlative sacrifice—a life broken, and spent, and laid down for the redemption of the race. They are the emblems of a glorious inspiration, the emblems of a glorified life that is for ever sacrificed, ever willing to spend

itself to restore and glorify mankind. And they are the mysteries and symbols of a magnificent calling, dumb mouths appealing to men to give themselves to a great crusade. For can we look at His broken body, broken in service, and then scheme and scheme to keep our skins entire and save them from being worn and broken in the hard and jagged way of service? And can we gaze upon "the blood of the new covenant," the blood so freely shed, and then immure ourselves in slipp'd ease, and never shed a drop of our heart's blood for the uplifting of the children of men? It is to young men that I would appeal, and by God's help I would put speech into the dumb mouths of the emblems: it is a young Saviour—only thirty-three when He was crucified—it is "the young Prince of Glory" appealing to the young men, and in the broken bread claiming their bodies, even though they may be broken in the enterprise, and claiming their very blood, that they, too, may bleed in the holy service.

"Ye know not what ye ask!" How frequently we share these uninformed petitions! We, too, are asking for summits, and the Lord answers our prayer, but it is so unlike the answer we expected, for we find ourselves in heavy and burdensome roads: but these are the first-fruits of grace, for they mark the road that leads to the heights. I asked the gardener for a finer hedge, closer in texture, a vesture without raggedness—no hole, no rent or seam. And O, what mutilations followed the request, what clippings, what bleedings, what apparent waste! A finer hedge had to be gained through the ministry of sacrifice. You ask your Lord for sovereign joy. You know not what you ask. Deeper joy is the issue of deeper refinement; and so, instead of immediate joy, the Lord led you into the discipline of severity, that the chords of your soul might be rendered more sensitive, that so to their more delicate responsiveness there might be given more exquisite delight. You asked for sovereign beauty, spiritual beauty; you asked that "the beauty of the Lord" might be upon you. You know not what you asked; for between you and that sovereignty there lies Gethsemane, with its exhausting but beautifying ministries of intercessory prayer and sacrifice. You are asking for heaven, for a sovereign abode in the seats of the blest. You know not what you ask!

*They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,  
Through peril, toil, and pain!*

Heaven is the abode of the sacrificial, the gathering place of crusaders; the secret of heaven's glory is to be found in the glorious characters we have fashioned on the way.

And so the gist of it all is this: thrones are for those who are fit to sit on them; we arrive at our throne when we are ready to rule. Sovereignties come to us in grace and sacrifice. It is well to lift our eyes to the hills, to the sublime human sovereignties which fill the vision in the sacred word, and then in the strength of God's blessed grace and love set out for the difficult climb. For we have not to wait for our Lord's companionship until we reach a throne; He is with us while we are aspiring to it. He does not wait the warrior's arrival when the battle is over and won; He is with us on the field. Our companionship does not begin at the summit; it begins at the base. It is an interchange of cups from the start, "I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me."

The sons of Zebedee came to the throne, but by ways of which they had never dreamed. "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." . . . "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of!" James scaled his sovereignty by the bloody slopes of martyrdom. As for John, the evening of his days was a stormy and blood-red sunset, spent in the pains of an exile sustained by the inexpressible fellowship of his Lord.

#### 4. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST<sup>1</sup>

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ." II COR. 1:5.

And that word "sufferings," when used by the Apostle Paul, is not a big term to express a very little thing. "For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life." And still later in the same letter we have another glimpse of the apostle in suffering. "In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in death oft, of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." And yet, in the very midst of this tumultuous narrative, like birdsong in a thunderstorm, there rises this melodious assurance—"As the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ."

It is a strange conjunction this of "suffering" and "comfort." And it is all the more strange when they are put together in the relations of cause and effect, and comfort emerges from suffering as springs have been loosened by the earthquake at Messina, as volcanic influences are productive of conditions which feed the most luxurious vines. But apostolic teaching is also the teaching of common experience. Apart altogether from the Christian revelation men have learned that affliction and consolation, suffering and blessedness, are not alien and mutually repellent, but related by affinities vital and profound.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The School of Calvary*, James Clarke & Co. Ltd.

Even Positivism, which is just a vast scheme of benevolence comprehending every form of sentient life, and which aims at universal blessedness, "decks itself out in the bloodstained garment of Christian asceticism," and in order to gain happiness employs the ministry of sacrifice. One of the primary precepts or principles of Positivism is just this—either suffer or die!

But the teaching which links the volcano and the vine, the earthquake and the springs, suffering and blessedness, affliction and emancipation, is pre-eminently significant of the Christian religion. It found its symbol of life in the minister of apparent death. Its emblem of victory is a cross, and its ascending transitions are crucifixions. It fashions its glories out of seeming shame, as the loveliest hues are extracted from the blackest pitch. It has only one path into life—a strait gate and a narrow way: it has only one secret of joyful liberty—self-sacrifice and vigilant self-restraint. "If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." We can only obtain the wine of life through the crushing of the grapes. Affliction introduces us to the juices and the mannas. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ."

And so let us turn our minds in quiet meditation upon those "sufferings of Christ" in whose fellowship we are to find our consolation. And let us first of all remind ourselves of the words in which our Lord described His holy purpose and ministry:—"He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Such is the range and richness of our Lord's redemptive mission. Now the range of our possible sufferings is determined by the largeness and nobility of our aims. It is possible to evade a multitude of sorrows by the cultivation of an insignificant life. Indeed, if it be a man's ambition to avoid the troubles of life the receipt is perfectly simple:—let him shed his ambitions in every direction, let him cut the wings of every soaring purpose, and let him assiduously cultivate a little life, with the fewest correspondences and relations. By this means a whole continent of afflictions will be escaped and will remain unknown. Cultivate negations, and large tracts of the universe will cease to exist. For instance, cultivate deafness, and you are saved from the horrors of discords. Cultivate blindness, and you are saved from the assault of the ugly. Stupefy a sense, and you shut out a world. And therefore it is literally true that if you want to get through the world with the smallest

trouble you must reduce yourself to the smallest compass. And indeed, that is why so many people, and even so many professedly Christian people, get through life so easily, and with a minimum acquaintance with tribulation. It is because they have reduced their souls to a minimum, that their course through the years is not so much the transit of a man as the passage of an amoeba. They have no finely organised nervous system, or they have deadened and arrested the growth of one nerve after another, they have cut the sensitive wires which bind the individual to the race, and they are cosily self-contained, and the shuddering sorrow of the world never disturbs their seclusion. Tiny souls can dodge through life; bigger souls are blocked on every side.

As soon, therefore, as a man begins to enlarge his life his resistances are multiplied. Let a man tear out of his soul the petty selfish purpose and enthrone a world-purpose, the Christ-purpose, and his sufferings will be increased on every side. Every addition to spiritual ambition widens the exposure of the soul, and sharpens its perception of the world's infirmity and the sense of its own restraints. How then was it with that vast spiritual ambition of the Saviour which He Himself described in words which I have quoted from the gospel by Luke? That all-absorbing redemptive purpose was bound to introduce Him to ceaseless suffering.

First of all, there were the sufferings which were incident to the very existence of a majestic purpose. Vast ambitions are not kept burning in the soul without fuel. They suck the very energies of the body into their own flame. Fine passion makes a heavy drain upon the nerves; the suburbs are scoured to feed the fire at the centre. There is not a man or woman of holy Christian passion in England to-day who is not "burning the candle at both ends." They cannot help it. And the consequence is they experience the sufferings which are incident to the limitations of the flesh. The body is too frail for the fiery spirit. The steed is exhausted while the driver is quite fresh. And therefore do these passionate hearts suffer in the imprisonment of their own physical restraints. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened!" And do you wonder, as you read the record of the sacred life, that you come upon significant words like these:—"And Jesus, being wearied, sat thus by the well." "And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." May I say it reverently—it was the tired-out body, the exhausted minister which carried the holy, passionate redemptive purpose of God.

And secondly, there were His sufferings which were incident to the passive antagonism of the indifferent. I mention these before I men-

tion the antagonism of His positive foes because I think they inflict a deeper wound. The fiery crusader can meet an active opponent and overthrow him, but what can he do with the indifferent who have not a spark of concern? If you are passionate about anything the indifference of others will make you wonder: if it is a moral enthusiasm the indifference will give you pain. "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?" That is the cry of a wounded spirit. They would not even turn aside to glance at the pearl of great price! I think there is no crucifixion for the spiritually chivalrous man equal to that which is inflicted by the unconcern of those whom he seeks to redeem. There is one sentence in James Gilmour's diary which was surely written in blood. It was written after years of labour. "In the shape of converts I have seen no result. I have not, as far as I am aware, seen any one who even *wanted* to be a Christian." And that was the experience of a man who, when he arrived at his field of labour, had written these words in his diary:—"Several huts in sight! When shall I be able to speak to the people? O Lord, suggest by the Spirit how I should come among them, and guide me in gaining the language, and in preparing myself to teach the life and love of Christ Jesus!" . . . "I have not, as far as I am aware, seen any one who even wanted to be a Christian." Surely that was "the fellowship of His sufferings!"

And, thirdly, there were His sufferings which were incident to the active antagonism of his foes. There were the sufferings occasioned by passivity, but there are also the sufferings occasioned by hostility. One man has no interest in your message, the other listens and rejects. One man scarcely lifts his eyes to look at you: "so was it in the days of Noah!" The other stands up to you and declares you have a devil. Your aims are distorted, your spirit is misinterpreted; you are said to be wearing a stolen livery, assuming a benevolent purpose while you are seeking your own ends. And so it was with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Hostilities were multiplied. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Now all these sufferings are sufferings which we can partially share with our Lord. There are other of His sufferings, mysterious and awful, of which we may know little or nothing.

*We may not know, we cannot tell  
What pains He had to bear.*

Those secrets are yet enfolded in gross darkness; and all that we at present know is this—that out of the darkness, as from black subter-

ranean depths, there flows "a river of water of life, clear as crystal," medicinal, strong in gracious healing, and carrying the virtuous energies of moral and spiritual transformation. There is something here which we can never share. "It is finished." But the other sufferings I named we must and we shall share, if we share the largeness of His purpose, and in our own degree seek the moral and spiritual redemption of the race. There is a space left for your energies and mine, and therefore for your sufferings and mine: we can "fill up that which is lacking of the affliction of Christ."

And now, for one moment, I turn the matter round. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ." If we have fellowship in the one we shall have fellowship in the other. I have already said that if we lessened our lives we should lessen our sorrows. It is now needful to add that if we lessen our lives we also lessen our joys. Deaden the sense of hearing and you escape the discords, but you also lose the harmonies. Drug your artistic sense, and you lose the pain of the ugly, but you also lose the inspiration of the lovely. If by the enlargement of my life I let in human sorrow I also let in divine consolation. A big, holy purpose makes me more sensitive toward the sin and hostility of man, but it also makes me more sensitive toward God. If the sufferings abound, "so our comfort aboundeth also." If I said nothing more than this, this alone would suffice: if we suffer with Christ, Christ Himself becomes a great reality. When life is a picnic we play with theology: when life becomes a campaign we grope for a religion. It is one thing sounding when your boat is in the open sea: it is another thing sounding when the menacing rocks are on every side. When we suffer with Christ we come to know Christ, to come face to face with reality, and the idle superfluities drop away. "And our comfort also aboundeth through Christ." Our fellowship with His sorrows makes us receptive of His joys; "My joy shall be in you, and your joy shall be full." Our fellowship in His battles makes us receptive of His peace; "My peace I give unto you." There is no surer way of becoming sure of Christ than to follow the way of sacrificial life and service. It may bring us into a fiery furnace of suffering, but "in the midst of the fire" there shall be one "like unto the Son of God."

## 5. WITHERED HANDS<sup>1</sup>

All the miracles of our Lord are purposed to be symbols of analogous works which can be wrought in the soul. "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power" to heal and emancipate the spirit He restored a paralyzed body to freedom. He drove the palsy out of the body as a token that He could drive the palsy out of the soul. He could impart the same strength and buoyancy and agility to the one as He had given to the other. And so it is with all the miracles of our Lord; they are types of the "greater things than these" which He can work among the secret needs of the spirit. Here was a man with a withered hand. A legend comes along the centuries that he was a bricklayer, an ordinary working man, who had been reduced to impotence by the loss of the member he needed most. But his calamity had not embittered him or made him spiritually insensitive. He was found in the synagogue seeking communion with God. And there the Master met him and restored life to his withered limb, and he was whole again.

Now there are withered faculties of the soul. There are spiritual members that can become dry and impotent. There are mysterious hands which can lose their grip and even their power to apprehend the heights. And a diseased faculty can impair the strength of the entire life. It can check our spiritual progress, and impair the vigour of moral aspiration and service. And these withered limbs can be found in the Church. They are brought into the place of worship, and they are often taken out again withered and dead. We do not establish the communion with the Healer which insures the ministry of the irresistible forces of grace.

The faculty of love can be a withered hand. It can shrivel away until it has no strength, no reach, no hold. I suppose we may test the quality of love by the length and strength of its apprehension. How far can it stretch? What is the intensity of its grip? How long can it hold out? The people who have the strongest love have the fullest as-

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<sup>1</sup> From *Things That Matter Most*, Fleming H. Revell, 1913.

surance of moral triumph. It is sometimes said that money can unlock any door. The statement is the merest nonsense. There are treasure-houses, the most real and the best, that money can never touch. Love is the great "open sesame." A man with a fine love burns his way like fervent iron through ice. He pierces through every difficulty, and nothing is allowed to obstruct his way. "Love never faileth." But when the love itself begins to wither, like a limb that shrivels through lack of vitality, life is comparatively impotent. And how frequently we see this spiritual tragedy! "I have something against thee, thou hast lost thy first love." It is the disease of the withered hand. Something has happened at the very fountains of vitality, and love sickens and dies.

The faculty of hope can be like a withered hand. Think for a moment of a man endowed with brilliant hope, pursuing some personal quest or engaged in some social crusade. What power there is in his goings! What spring there is in the feet of a man who "feels the days before him!" The man who lays hold of the triumph of to-morrow has a mighty inspiration in the battle of to-day. The man who sees "the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" is a glorious labourer in the Jerusalem that is, seeking to transform and transfigure it into the light and beauty of his vision. The man endowed with hope is a magnificent worker. He sees the diamond in the carbon; he sees the finished garden in the desert waste. But if hope shrivels into despondency, or dies away in despair, how helpless is the man who touches the task! It is hope that fetches the bread that feeds endeavour; it is hope that sustains the life. We are "saved by hope." But let hope shrivel, and dullness steals over the spirit; laxity and limpness take possession of the soul. When a man can say, "I have lost my hope," he is a man with a withered hand.

The conscience can be a withered hand. A live conscience gives a man a fine, nervous, sensitive, "feeling" touch of the mind of God. It gives a man a discerning apprehension of right and wrong. When the feeling is really sensitive, what confidence it imparts to life's movements, what firmness, what motion, what decision! But the conscience can be benumbed. It can become as unresponsive as a paralyzed hand. Common experience affords abundant illustration. There are many people who were once endowed with a scrupulous moral sense, and in some way or other it has lost its exquisiteness, and they no longer finely realize the will of God. The withering is made manifest in apparently small disloyalties. We do not sustain the sense of honour in the full round of common life. There are ministers who are intensely

scrupulous about orthodoxy who are not equally scrupulous in more practical obligations. They shrink from heresy; they do not shrink from debt. I have known people deface other people's property by writing Scriptural texts upon it! They have a sensitive desire to serve the Lord, but their honour is not keen enough to make them respect the common rights of their fellows. And often the unscrupulous may degenerate into the vicious. Moral unsoundness is like every other disease, it can proceed from the apparent trifle until it corrupts the pillars of the life. Poison can begin with a pin-prick and may at length reach the heart. A withering conscience is an unspeakable peril. A withering conscience indicates that a man is dead.

The will may be like a withered hand. What a strong, pushful, resourceful hand it is when it is endowed with healthy vitality! But when it withers, everything is touched with irresolution and hesitancy. Nothing is initiated with power. Nothing is addressed with persistence. Nothing is accomplished with decision. A feeble will makes all life's doings anaemic. Everything is languid, from the sickly promise to the imperfect achievement.

What can we do with all or any of these faculties of the soul? We have only one resource. We can bring them to Him who made them, and who can remake them by the power of His grace. But we must bring them deliberately, naming the withered member in the presence of our Lord. We must bring them submissively, laying aside all presumption and pride. We must bring them obediently, ready and willing to carry out the King's decrees. If He orders us to attempt the impossible, we must attempt it. "Stretch forth thy hand!" The man might have replied, "Master, that is just what I cannot do!" "Stretch forth thy hand," and the attempt being made, the needful power was found, and the man was made whole. So must I bring my withered love to Him, and if need be I must "stretch it forth" in effort and service. If He bid me I must act as though I have a healthy love, and in the very effort I shall find I have received it. I must bring my withered hope to Him. At His command I must stretch it forth. I must act as a hopeful man, and I shall find that the gracious light is restored. The Saviour's power goes with the Saviour's demand. The Saviour's power is received in human obedience.

## 6. FORGETTING GOD<sup>1</sup>

There is one word of God which runs through the Scriptures like a sad and poignant refrain, "My people have forgotten Me." "Forgotten" is an intense and awful word. It surely expresses the final issue in human alienation from the Divine. Open and deliberate revolt against God shows, at any rate, some respect to His power. And even formal prayer, empty though it be, offers some recognition of God's existence. But to forget Him, to live and plan and work as though He were not, to dismiss Him as insignificant—this is surely the last expression of a separated life. People are never really dead so long as they are remembered. The real death is to be forgotten. How, then, do we come to forget God? In what sort of conditions is this appalling forgetfulness brought about? I wish to quote two or three descriptive words from the Scriptures in which I think some of these cases are described.

*"Afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker."* The fear of man destroys the nobler fear of God. I suppose that one may say that two commanding fears cannot occupy the soul at one and the same time. One fear can drive out another. The fear that is created by the cracking of a whip can drive out the fear which possesses a shying horse when he sees some unfamiliar object upon the road. If a fire break out on a cold wintry night, the fear of the flames can drive out of the soul the fear of the frost. It seems as though one fear draws to itself the energies of the mind, and other fears are left with no sustenance. A big tree in a garden-bed sucks into its fibres the juices of the soil for many yards around, and other growths are starved, and they wither and die.

So it is with "the fear of man." It drains to itself the mental energy and devotion which ought to feed the fear of God. A politician who is moved by fear of man, and who tacks and trims to avoid his hostility, can never retain an efficient thought of God. So it is with a minister who is afraid of man; his mind is not filled with a vision of

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<sup>1</sup> From *Things That Matter Most*, Fleming H. Revell, 1913.

"the Lord high and lifted up." But, indeed, the same is true of anybody. If the barometer we consult for our guidance is the opinion and conventions of man, God Himself will be nothing. If we are always consulting man, moved and governed by his expediencies, God will vanish away. "The fear of man is a snare," and the power of the snare is found in its fascination to allure our minds from the Lord of Hosts. "Afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker."

And here is another type from the portrait gallery of the Bible. "*Thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength.*" Here is a forgetfulness that is born when we have recovered from some weakness. Pride of strength makes us forget the rock out of which we were hewn. This is a most common and insidious peril. Our weakness helps our remembrance of God; our strength is the friend of forgetfulness. Perhaps this is most apparent in our physical weakness. In our weakness we remember the Lord, and the dim things of the unseen come clearly into view. But when our strength is regained the vivid vision fades again, and is sometimes entirely lost. And so our strength is really our drug. It is an opiate which ministers to spiritual forgetfulness. And so it is with every kind of strength. Frailty in any direction makes us lean upon the power of the Almighty, and in every frailty our remembrance of Him is keen and clear. But our strength helps to create a feeling of independence, and we become unmindful of our God. And therefore it is that a man who never knows weakness has a stupendous task in maintaining communion with God. People who never know what it is to be ill have so many more barriers to overcome in their fellowship with the Unseen.

And here is a third Scriptural type of spiritual forgetfulness. "*They have gone from mountain to hill, and have forgotten their resting-places.*" It is the figure of a flock of wandering sheep roaming away over the distant hills and mountains. They have gone from one place to another, and in the range of their goings have forgotten their place of rest. Their very vagrancy has made them insensible to their real home. That is to say, their vagrancy has induced forgetfulness.

Now I think this word is very descriptive of much of our modern life. It is a vagrancy rather than a crusade. We go from "mountain to hill," and from hill to mountain. We are always on the move. We are for ever seeking something else and never finding satisfaction. We get weary and tired with one thing and we trudge to another! We are here, there, and yonder, and our lives become jaded and stale. But the extraordinary thing is that in all our goings we forget our resting-place.

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Yes, but we turn anywhere and everywhere rather than to this. Our lives can become so vagrant that God is exiled from our minds. It seems as though there is something in vagrancy that stupefies the soul, and renders us insensitive to our true home and rest in God.

When I first came to New York, during the first few months of my ministry, I was continually asked by people, "Have you got into the whirl?" The very phrase seems so far removed from the words of the psalmist, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters." Not that the psalmist luxuriated in indolence, or spent his days in the fatness of ease; the rest was only preparative to a march. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." But from the march he returned to his resting-place. But we can be caught in such a whirl in our modern life that we just rush from one thing to another, and we forget the glorious rest that is ours in God. I think the enemy of our souls must love to get us into a whirl! If once we are dizzied with sensations we are likely to lose the thought of God. "They have gone from the mountain to the hill, and have forgotten their resting-place."

Let me give one further example from the Word of God. "*According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.*" Here is a rich pasturage, and in the enjoyment of it there is born the spirit of forgetfulness. And surely this is the stupefaction of abundance. In Southern France, where attar of roses is distilled, a very curious ailment imperils the workers. The very abundance of the rose-leaves induces a sort of sleeping-sickness. And surely it is even so in the abundances that are sometimes given to man. They are prone to sink him into the sleep of spiritual forgetfulness.

A man's devotion is apt to dwindle as he becomes more successful. Our piety does not keep pace with our purse. Absorption in bounty makes us forgetful of the Giver. We can be so concerned in the pasturage that the Shepherd is forgotten. Our very fulness is apt to become our foe. Our clearest visions are given us in the winter-time when nature is scanty and poor. The fulness of the leaf blocks the outlook and the distance is hid. And the summer-time of life, when leaves and flowers are plentiful, is apt to bring a veil. And the very plentifullness impedes our communion.

These are some of the types of forgetfulness which are mentioned and described in the Word of God. Is there any help for us? There is a very gracious promise of the Master in which I think all these

perils are anticipated, and in the strength of which they can be met and overcome: "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Here is the promise of a gracious minister to the memory, strengthening it in its hold upon the unseen. I suppose that one of the most urgent needs of the common life is the sanctification of the memory. If the memory were to be really hallowed it would forget many things which it now remembers, and it would certainly remember many things which it now forgets. We are apt to retain worthless things, and destructive things, things that ought to have been dropped and buried and left in their graves in past years. But we carry them with us to our undoing. The ministry of the Holy Spirit will deal with this unwise retention, and will make a memory leaky where it is wise for it to lose. But, more than that, it will strengthen its powers of spiritual comprehension, and will enable it to keep hold of the unseen and the eternal. What should I most like to remember? I should like to remember with unfailing constancy the glorious, holy Being of the eternal God. I should like to remember the unspeakable ministry of His grace, which worked in my redemption in Christ Jesus, my Lord. I should like to remember the benefits of His daily providence which shine along my road in unfailing succession. I should like to remember the eternal significance of transient events, and hold the lessons of yesterday's happenings to guide me in my march to-day. And when new occasions and new duties arise, and I am face to face with novel circumstances, I should like to be reminded of those words of the Lord Jesus which would give me the needful illumination: "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

## 7. BLINDING THE MIND<sup>1</sup>

There is a phrase of the Apostle Paul which contains a warning peculiarly relevant to the times through which we are passing. It is this: "*The god of this world hath blinded the minds.*" What is the significance of the phrase, "*The god of this world*"? Here is a certain evil influence personified. A certain immoral energy or contagion is conceived and presented as an active, aggressive, personal force, which deliberately seeks to dwarf, and bruise, and lame the richly-dowered souls of men. He is elsewhere depicted as of princely line, with imposing retinues and armies, moving stealthily amid human affairs, and inciting men to rebellion against the holy sovereignty of God. He is represented as "the prince of the powers of the air," subtle and persuasive as an atmosphere, insinuating himself into the most sacred privacies and invading even the most holy place. He is "the god of this world," receiving homage and worship, the god to whom countless thousands offer ceaseless sacrifice, while the holy Lord of grace and glory is neglected or defied. I am not now concerned with this personification, whether it be literalistic or merely figurative; but I am concerned with the reality of the power itself, whose seductive energy corrupts our holiest treasures, and blunts and spoils the finest perceptions of the soul.

Now, everybody is familiar with the characteristics of this destructive ministry. There is no need of abstruse or hair-splitting analysis. The issues are obtrusive; we have only to examine our own souls and their besetments, and the peril is revealed. We may have dropped the personification, but we recognize the energy which is personified. We may have abandoned the figure, but we are familiar with the thing. We may no longer speak of "the god of this world," but "worldliness" itself is palpable and rampant. This is our modern phraseology. We speak of "the worldly" and "the unworldly," but unfortunately the terms are very loosely and indefinitely used, or used with a quite perverse significance. The "unworldly" is too often identified with the

<sup>1</sup> From *Things That Matter Most*, Fleming H. Revell, 1913.

"other-worldly," and is interpreted as an austere isolation from all festivity, and from the hard, hand-soiling concerns of practical life. And on the other hand, "worldliness" is too often identified with gaiety, or levity, or prodigality, with drink and pride, with theatrical glamour and vulgar sheen. But these interpretations do not touch the heart of the matter. What, then, is worldliness? Worldliness is life without ideals, life without moral vistas, life devoid of poetic vision. It is life without the halo, life without the mystic nimbus which invests it with venerable and awful sanctity. It is imprisonment within the material, no windows opening out upon ethereal, moral, or altruistic ends. It is the five senses without the moral sense. It is quickness to appetite and dulness to conscience. It is engrossment in sensations, it is heedlessness to God's "awful rose of dawn." It is rank materialism.

Now this powerful contagion operates in the deprivation of sight. Materialism and moral blindness stand in the relation of cause and effect. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds." That is to say, a practical materialism destroys the eyes of the soul. The materialistic life deadens the conscience, and in the long run puts it to death. The materialistic life stupefies the imagination, and in the long run makes it inoperative. The materialistic life defiles the affections, and converts their crystalline lens into a minister of darkness and night. The materialistic life coarsens the spiritual instincts, and renders them non-appreciative of things unseen. And so it is with all the vision-powers of life; a practical materialism plugs or scales them and makes the spirit blind.

But I will still further narrow the interpretation, and confine this article to that aspect of worldliness which is concerned with the bare pursuit of material gain. If "the god of this world" must be given a single name, let the name be Mammon, and let the love of money be the worship which is offered at his shrine. And does the god of money blind the mind? Let it get into the pulpit, and everybody knows the result. The spiritual heavens become opaque, and there is no awe-inspiring discernment of "things unseen." Everybody recognizes its destructiveness in the ministry, but everybody does not equally recognize the destructiveness in other lives and other professions. But the moral issues are one and the same; always and everywhere the god of money blinds the mind.

Let me give a Scriptural illustration of its nefarious work. A woman, who had been spiritually enfranchised by the Lord, and who had been led out of the dreary, wan land of sin into the fair, bright lily-land of God's eternal peace, brought an alabaster box of ointment, very pre-

cious, and anointed her Deliverer's feet. And there was one standing by, who looked upon it with uninspired and unillumined eyes, and said, "To what purpose is *this waste?*" . . . "This he said . . . because he was a thief, and carried the bag!" He was the victim of the god of money, and he was blind, and he could see no beauty or grace in this passionate love-offering of an emancipated child of God. There was nothing winsome about the woman that he should commend her; and, more than that, when he looked upon the woman's Lord there was "no beauty" that he should desire Him! "What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." And for that "thirty pieces of silver" he sold his Lord! May we not add, "the god of this world" had blinded his mind?

But there is no need for us to go back to those remote days for illustration of the truth. Every succeeding century has abounded in confirmation of its truth. But let me confine myself to witnesses from modern history. I know of no more shameful page in the history of our country than the page which tells the story of our early demeanour in the American Civil War. The North was valorously intent upon lifting the tyranny of the South, and letting the bond-slave free. And vast multitudes of our people sympathized with the callous and slaveholding South, and ranged themselves in bitter antagonism to the chivalrous North. And what was the explanation? Just this, they were unable to see the interests of humanity because of their interests in cotton. They couldn't see the slave for the dollar, or they saw him only as a chattel to be despised. Henry Ward Beecher came over to expostulate with our countrymen, and to seek to open their eyes. He came here to plead for the slaves—those slaves unveiled to us in the bleeding pages of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." He came to Liverpool. Now listen to a contemporary document and you will think you are reading the Press of the past few weeks. "It would be impossible for tongue or pen adequately to describe the scenes at the meeting. The great hall was packed to the crushing point. The mob was out in force. The interruptions were incessant: cat-calls, groans, and hisses." And at what part of the meeting did the disorder culminate? It was when Beecher, bit by bit, got out these sentences and rammed them home: "When I was twelve years old, my father hired Charles Smith, a man as black as lamp-black, to work on his farm. I slept with him in the same room. (Oh! oh!) Ah, that don't suit you. (Uproar.) I ate with him at the same table; I sang with him out of the same hymn-book; I cried when he prayed over me at night; and if I had serious impres-

sions of religion early in life, they were due to the fidelity and example of that poor, humble farm-labourer, black Charles Smith. (Tremendous uproar.)" What think you of the significance of that uproar? They saw no moral dignity in Charles Smith that they should desire him. That Liverpool mob could not see the slave because they were so intent upon the dollar.

Read the chivalrous history of the good Lord Shaftesbury. In his early manhood, when he began his noble crusade of emancipation, women and girls were employed in coal-mines, as beasts of burden. Their condition haunted him, and became a nightmare which possessed him day and night, and he set about to ameliorate their lot. He sought to prohibit their employment. With what result? The mine-owners were up and in arms. "It spells ruin to our trade!" They could not see the degradation for the gold. They feared a shrinking purse more than a shrunken womanhood. They could not see the woman for the bank. But Lord Ashley disregarded their cries, and at length he had the supreme happiness of putting a stop to this infamous sort of labour by an act which declared that, after a certain limited period, no woman or girl should ever again be employed in our collieries and mines.

When Queen Victoria came to the throne, a dispute with China was developing into a very ugly menace. Soon after it broke out into open war. And what did we fight about? We fought for the right of Great Britain to force a destructive trade upon a people who did not want it, in spite of the protestations of its government, and in spite of all such national opinion as could find a public expression. There was money in it for Britain, there was revenue in it for India, and therefore China had got to have it! It is China's burden, China's curse, China's appalling woe, and still we force it on her. And the explanation is clear. We cannot see the evil for the revenue. We cannot see the wasting victim for the swelling exchequer. Some day Britain will get the gold-dust out of her eyes, and then she will see—she will see the reeking opium dens, and the emaciated manhood, and the devastated families, and the blighted race, and in her shame she will wash her hands of the traffic, and decree the emancipation of a people. At present, money plugs the eyes.

And there is very great need that in our own day we deliver ourselves from the servitude of this mammon. In our day, when the Spirit of God is at work in our midst, inciting dissatisfaction and unrest, and creating a ferment among the peoples, our vision and our sympathy can be dulled and checked by the common love of money.

The peril is insidious, and it invades even the most holy place. The spirit of greed dwells not alone among the wealthy and the well-to-do, it can make its home with people of slender means. What we need, above all things, is to have our eyes anointed with the eye-salve of grace, that so our vision may be single and simple, and we may have the mind of Christ. What we need is unscaled sight, and with unscaled sight there will come fresh and healthy sympathies, and an eager participation in every chivalrous crusade.

## 8. THE SHIELD OF FAITH<sup>1</sup>

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." EPH. 6:16.

But did the apostle who gives the counsel find his faith an all-sufficient shield? He recommends the shield of faith, but is the recommendation based on personal experience? And if so, what is the nature and value of that experience? What sort of protection did his faith give to him? When I examine his life what tokens do I find of guardianship and strong defence? When I move through the ways of his experience is it like passing through quiet and shady cloisters shut away from the noise and heat of the fierce and feverish world? Is his protected life like a garden walled around, full of sweet and pleasant things, and secured against the maraudings of robber and beast? Let us look at this protected life. Let us glance at the outer circumstances. Here is one glimpse of his experience: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; once was I stoned; thrice have I suffered shipwreck; a day and a night have I been in the deep; in stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in deaths oft; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." And yet this is the man who speaks about the shield of faith, and in spite of the protecting shield all these things happened unto him!

Look at his bodily infirmities. "There was given unto me a thorn in the flesh." Where was the shield? It is not necessary for us to know the character of his thorn. But assuredly it was some ailment which appeared to interfere with the completeness of his work. Some think it was an affliction of the eyes; others think that it was a proneness to some form of malarial fever which frequently brought him into a state of collapse and exhaustion. But there it was, and the shield of faith did not keep it away.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Whole Armour of God*, Fleming H. Revell, 1916.

Or look again at his exhausting labours. There is no word concerning his ministry more pregnant with meaning than this word "labour," which the apostle so frequently used to describe his work. "In labours oft"; "whereunto I labour"; "I laboured more abundantly than they all." This is not the labour of ordinary toil. It is the labour of travail. It is labour to the degree of poignant pang. It is labour that so expends the strength as to empty the fountain. It is the labour of sacrifice. And I thought that perhaps a protected life might have been spared the sufferings of a living martyrdom and that the service such a man rendered might have been made fruitful without pain. I thought God might have protected His servant: But the shield of faith did not deliver him from the labour of travail through which he sought the birth of the children of grace.

Or look once more at his repeated failures. You can hear the wail of sadness as he frequently contemplates his ruined hopes concerning little churches which he had built, or concerning fellow-believers whom he had won to Christ. "Are ye so soon fallen away?" "Ye would have given your eyes to me but now—." "I hear that there is strife among you." "It is reported that there is uncleanness among you." "Demus hath forsaken me." And it is wail after wail, for it is failure after failure. Defeat is piled upon defeat. It is declared to be a protected life, and yet disasters litter the entire way. It is perfectly clear that the shield of faith did not guard him from the agony of defeat.

Such are the experiences of the man who gave his strength to proclaim the all-sufficiency of the shield of faith, who spent his days in recommending it to his fellowmen, and whose own life was nevertheless noisy with tumult, and burdened with antagonisms, and crippled by infirmity, and clouded with defeat. Can this life be said to be wearing a shield? We have so far been looking at the man's environment, at his bodily infirmities, at his activities of labor, at his external defeats. What if in all these things we have not come within sight of the realm which the apostle would describe as his life? When Paul speaks of life he means the life of the soul. When he thinks of life his eyes are on the soul. In all the estimates and values which he makes of life he is fixedly regarding the soul. The question of success or failure in life is judged by him in the courthouse of the soul. You cannot entice the apostle away to life's accidents and induce him to take his measurements there. He always measures life with the measurement of an angel, and thus he busies himself not with the amplitude of possessions, but with the quality of being, not with the outer estates of circumstances but with the central keep and citadel

of the soul. We never find the apostle Paul with his eyes glued upon the wealth or poverty of his surroundings. But everywhere and always and with endless fascination, he watches the growth or decay of the soul. When, therefore, this man speaks of the shield of faith we may be quite sure that he is still dwelling near the soul and that he is speaking of a protection which will defend the innermost life from foul and destructive invasion.

Now our emphasis is prone to be entirely the other way, and therefore we are very apt to misinterpret the teachings of the apostle Paul and to misunderstand the holy promises of the Lord. We are prone to live in the incidents of life rather than in its essentials, in environment rather than in character, in possessions rather than in dispositions, in the body rather than in the soul. The consequence is that we seek our shields in the realms in which we live. We live only in the things of the body and therefore against bodily ills we seek our shields. We want a shield against sorrow, to keep it away, a shield to protect us against the break-up of our happy estate. We want a shield against adversity, to keep it away, a shield against the darkening eclipse of the sunny day. We want a shield against loss, to keep it away, a shield against the rupture of pleasant relations, a shield to protect us against the bereavements which destroy the completeness of our fellowships. We want a shield against pain, to keep it away, a shield against the pricks and goads of piercing circumstances, against the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

In a word, we want a shield to make us comfortable, and because the shield of faith does not do it we are often stunned and confused, and our thin reasonings are often twisted and broken, and the world appears a labyrinth without a providence and without a plan. It is just here that our false emphasis leads us astray. We live in circumstances and seek a shield to make us comfortable; but the apostle Paul lived in character and sought a shield to make him holy. He was not concerned with the arrangement of circumstances, but he was concerned with the aspiration that, be the circumstances what they might, they should never bring disaster to his soul. He did not seek a shield to keep off ill-circumstances, but he sought a shield to keep ill-circumstances from doing him harm. He sought a shield to defend him from the destructiveness of every kind of circumstance, whether fair or foul, whether laden with sunshine or heavy with gloom. Paul wanted a shield against all circumstances in order that no circumstance might unman him and impoverish the wealth of his soul.

Let me offer a simple illustration. A ray of white light is made

up of many colors, but we can devise screens to keep back any one of these colors and to let through those we please. We can filter the rays. Or we can devise a screen to let in rays of light and to keep out rays of heat. We can intercept certain rays and forbid their presence. Now, to the apostle Paul the shield of faith was a screen to intercept the deadly rays which dwell in every kind of circumstance; and to Paul the deadly rays in circumstances, whether the circumstances were bright or cloudy, were just those that consumed his spiritual susceptibilities and lessened his communion with God, the things that ate out his moral fibre, and that destroyed the wholeness and wholesomeness of his human sympathies, and impaired his intimacy with God and man. It was against these deadly rays he needed a shield, and he found it in the shield of faith.

Paul wanted a shield, not against failure; that might come or stay away. But he wanted a shield against the pessimism that may be born of failure, and which holds the soul in the fierce bondage of an Arctic winter. Paul wanted a shield, not against injury; that might come or stay away; but against the deadly thing that is born of injury, even the foul offspring of revenge. Paul wanted a shield, not against pain; that might come or might not come; he sought a shield against the spirit of murmuring which is so frequently born of pain, the deadly, deadening mood of complaint. Paul wanted a shield, not against disappointment, that might come or might not come; but against the bitterness that is born of disappointment, the mood of cynicism which sours the milk of human kindness and perverts all the gentle currents of the soul. Paul wanted a shield, not against difficulty; that might come or might not come; but against the fear that is born of difficulty, the cowardice and the disloyalty which are so often bred of stupendous tasks. Paul did not want a shield against success; that might come or might not come; but against the pride that is born of success, the deadly vanity and self-conceit which scorch the fair and gracious things of the soul as a prairie-fire snaps up a homestead or a farm. Paul did not want a shield against wealth; that might come or might not come; but against the materialism that is born of wealth, the deadly petrifying influence which turns flesh into stone, spirituality into benumbment, and which makes a soul unconscious of God and of eternity. The apostle did not want a shield against any particular circumstance, but against every kind of circumstance, that in everything he might be defended against the fiery darts of the devil.

He found the shield he needed in a vital faith in Christ. First of all

the faith-life cultivates the personal fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The ultimate concern of faith is not with a polity, not with a creed, not with a church, and not with a sacrament, but with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore the first thing we have to do if we wish to wear the shield of faith is to cultivate the companionship of the Lord. We must seek His holy presence. We must let His purpose enter into and possess our minds. We must let His promises distil into our hearts. And we must let our own hearts and minds dwell upon the Lord Jesus in holy thought and aspiration, just as our hearts and minds dwell upon the loved ones who have gone from our side. We must talk to Him in secret and we must let Him talk to us. We must consult Him about our affairs, and then take His counsels as our statutes, and pay such heed to them that the statutes will become our songs. Faith-life cultivates the friendship of Christ, and leans upon it, and surrenders itself with glorious abandon to the sovereign decrees of His grace and love.

And then, secondly, the faith-life puts first things first, and in its list of primary values it gives first place to the treasures of the soul. Faith-life is more concerned with habits than with things, with character than with office, with self-respect than with popular esteem. The faith-life puts first things first, the clean mind and the pure heart, and from these it never turns its eyes away.

And, lastly, the faith-life contemplates the campaign rather than the single battle. One battle may seem to go against it. But faith knows that one battle is not the end of the world. "I will see you again, and your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Faith takes the long view, the view of the entire campaign. "I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God." Such a relationship to the Lord protects our life as with an invincible shield. It may please God to conduct our life through long reaches of cloudless noon; the shield of faith will be our defence. It may please God to lead us through the gloom of a long and terrible night; the shield of faith will be our defence. "Thou shalt not be afraid of the pestilence that walketh in darkness nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday."

## 9. THE BAPTISM OF FIRE<sup>1</sup>

"I Baptize you with water . . . He shall baptize you with fire." MATT. 3:2.

Water and fire! Our two great cleansing ministrants! The means we employ to rid ourselves of refuse and filth! Which is the more searching, the more powerful agent, water or fire? There are some deeply established uncleannesses for which the action of water is not sufficiently stringent. In many cases of contagious disease, if we are to rid ourselves of every vestige of corruption, there are many things which must be burnt. The germ of the contagion could not be washed away. They must be consumed away. Water would be altogether insufficient. We need fire! Fire is our most effective purifying minister, a powerful and relentless enemy of disease. In 1665 London was in the grip of that terrible Plague, the horror of which may still be felt through the pages of Defoe. The disease germs were hiding and breeding and multiplying everywhere. Every corner became a nest of contagion. Nothing could be found to displace it. In the following year the Great Fire broke out, and the plague-smitten city was possessed by the spirit of burning. London was literally baptized with fire, which sought out the most secret haunts of the contagion, and in the fiery baptism the evil genius of corruption gave place to the sweet and friendly genius of health. Fire accomplished quite easily what water would never have attained. And so in a comparison of fire and water as cleansing and redeeming agencies, common experience tells us that fire is the keener, the more searching, the more powerful, the more intense.

Well, now, here is John the Baptist, the last and the first of the prophets, heralding the kingdom of God. John the Baptist is a great man; "among them that are born of women none greater." He is a man with a clear and definite message, and therefore with a clear and definite mission. He is engaged in the holy task of calling men to re-

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<sup>1</sup> From *Apostolic Optimism*, George H. Doran, 1914.

pentance, of summoning them to more serious thought, to purer and sweeter feeling, to a larger and more unselfish life, the purpose of his mission is the cleansing of the human heart. "I baptize you with water." The baptism of John is a baptism by no means to be despised, but over and above his own baptism he exalts the baptism of the Christ. "I baptize you with water . . . He shall baptize you with fire." He brings into contrast the cleansing and reviving powers of the two baptisms. If you will pay heed to my counsel, be faithful to my teaching, a purging influence shall begin to work in your lives. But the cleansing influence which is created within you by my baptism has only the power of water. There is a purity, a passionate holiness, which cannot be gained by my cleansing. I baptize you with water. But when the Christ is come, He will create within you the cleansing powers which shall operate in your lives like fire, redeeming the influence more thorough, more penetrating, and more vital. When he is come, He will change water into fire, a spirit of cold obedience into a burning enthusiasm, a lukewarm and dutiful disposition into the eager passion of love. "I baptize you with water . . . He shall baptize you with fire."

Now let us confine ourselves for a little while to one line of inquiry, and see how this deep and powerful change might be effected. Let us approach the subject by the path of analogy. You know how immensely wide is the contrast in the effects produced upon the minds of children in presenting truth to them as an abstraction, and presenting it in a concrete dress. Suppose I begin to discourse to a number of children on some abstract truth. Suppose I use no illustrations, no analogies, no anecdotes. Suppose I decline to enshrine the truth in a vision, or picture, or tale, and present it to them as a pure abstraction —what effect shall I produce? At the best only a vague and stupid wonder. But, now, let us take the abstract truth and wrap it up in an illustration. Let it shine through the vesture of a story. Let it be embodied in a parable or a fairy-tale. What then will be the effect? Vague and fruitless wonder will immediately pass into vivid and pointed interest. But assume still further that we present the truth, not in an interesting story, but in an actual personality, in some loving, breathing man. Then the influence produced will still further be deepened; the feelings created will be far more vivid and intense.

Let me attempt to give this analogy greater definiteness by somewhat narrowing its range. Suppose I take the subject of heroism and discuss it before an assembly of children as an abstraction. I deal with it philosophically. I analyse it into its various mental and moral in-

gredients, and discuss the many minor attributes of which it is composed. What impression shall I create? Little or none; nothing more than an uneasy and fearful wonder. But now instead of dealing with heroism as an abstraction, let me put it into a tale, and tell them the story of some courageous man, the story of a Livingstone, or a Damien, or a Gordon. At once the shifting, indifferent wonder changes into a keen and interested attention. But let me go further, and instead of embodying the virtue in the story of some brave man, let the truth become incarnate, let the "Word become flesh," and let me produce the heroic man himself engaged in the heroic life. What, then, will be the result? The pointless wonder which followed the abstraction will change into a passionate admiration, which will further ripen into a fertile love. Now, what is the principle upon which all this is based? It is just this, that the operative influences which are created by truth in the heart of a child are determined in their depth and energy by the manner of its presentation, by the stage which has been reached on the pathway which begins in truth as an abstraction, and ends in truth as an incarnation. From abstraction to personality carries the feelings from chilling and indifferent wonder to eager and passionate love.

Now, see how this applies to the revelation of God and man's relationship to Him. In the earliest days God was almost an abstraction to His people. What was His name? "I am that I am." What can you make of that? There is no colour in it, nothing to lay hold of, nothing to lean upon. "I am that I am," a revelation just calculated to awake a feeling of wonder and fear. That was one of the earliest names in which the character of God embodied itself. But step by step God reveals Himself in experiences which create more definite and winsome names, and these names find their way into song and story. He begins to be known as "Refuge," as "Rock," as "Tower," as "Shield." He comes to be regarded as man's "Shepherd," because of the shepherdliness which his people perceive in the growing scope of His dealings with them. Put that name "Shepherd" side by side with the name "I am that I am." The colours of the character are beginning to emerge and shine in the growing light, and as the revelation passes further and further away from abstraction, and enshrines itself in that which is compassable and concrete, the influences created in man's heart become proportionately richer, more powerful, and more pregnant. In the fulness of time the last vestige of abstraction is removed. God remains no longer embodied in sweet and beautiful names, and renowned in song and story. He becomes incarnate in the flesh. He

appears before men as the Christ. He stands out among them to be gazed upon—a living and all-beautiful personality. The “I am that I am” reveals Himself in “Jesus of Nazareth.” Don’t you think that the heart-influences created by the “I am that I am” were incomparably weaker than the heart-influences created by “The Man, Christ Jesus”? Don’t you think that the spiritual energy begotten by the Shepherd God would be only thin and sluggish compared with the energy begotten by the Jesus God? The different influences created in men were analogous to the different effects produced upon children by abstraction and personality. What the “Word became flesh,” piety became transfused with passion; water was changed into fire. “I baptize you with water,” says the prophet John. The revelation which I have proclaimed has made you penitent, humble, and obedient, and this, indeed, has helped to cleanse and save you. But my baptism has only been the cleansing of water. The Christ who comes will reveal God in Himself, in His own person; and the revelation which He will make will be so full of unspeakable glory as to create in men a cleansing energy like fire, for their hearts shall become inflamed with an enthusiastic love.

Such, I think, is the great truth involved in the text which I wish now to submit to one or two practical applications. Let me say, first—what, indeed, has been involved in all that I have tried to say—that passionate religious enthusiasm attaches itself to a person; and the more near and real our intercourse with the person, the more beautiful will be our holiness, the more fiery-hearted will be our service and devotion. Just think for a moment what magnificent import this revelation in the person of Jesus had for those Jews who became His disciples. The religion of the Jews had become an obedience to precept and laws. The germ of their national faith is to be found in those ten laws which we call the Ten Commandments. But to these ten laws the Rabbis had made countless additional laws, petty trying, and irritating laws which had come to be regarded as of equal importance with the original ten. To the earnest Jew the warm, loving purpose of God had become buried in a mountainous mass of man-made traditions. It was no longer God with whom the Jew was dealing, but this vast deadweight of Rabbinical law. God had become to them an earth-born system, a burdensome “ism,” a heavy and smothering tradition. Then came the Christ, and the first thing he did was to tear these miles of wrappings away. He cast aside the traditions of the elders. He cried to the people, “You have been looking at an ‘ism,’ and you thought you were looking at God. Now look at me. He that

hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ lifted God out of abstraction, out of dead regulations and traditions, and presented the image of the eternal glory in His own person. God was no longer a burdensome law, but a great, near, and loving personality. And what happened to those disciples who received the revelation? Cold obedience to law was changed into enthusiastic obedience to a person. Cold and lukewarm water was changed into hot and cleansing fire. Take a modern Jew who has been converted into the Christian faith, and you will find that one of the favourite phrases by which he tried to give expression to his experience is this, "I feel a fire burning within me." What does he mean? He means that the sense of icy discipleship to law has become changed into a consciousness of warm discipleship to a person. He was baptized with water, now he is baptized with fire.

Is this in any way significant of the need of the Church to-day? Are we altogether beyond the need of this old warning, that an enthusiastic and saving and safe religious life can only be obtained by an intimate communion with the living Christ? Is the general church life of the English nation to-day characterized by devotion to an "ism" or by a personal passion for Christ? Are we trying to do by water what can only be done by fire? How is it with the character of the Church? Has she put on her beautiful garments, the garments of a holy and sanctified life? By cold obedience the Church can never be holy. If the Church would be pure the Church must be passionate. Why, the very heart of the word "pure" is suggestive of fire. It is significant of an end which has been reached through the ministry of flame. You cannot have purity without burning; you cannot have holiness without the baptism of fire. When devotion burns low, and personal piety smoulders down into a cold spirit of obedience, the "beauty of holiness" becomes an impossible attainment. But when devotion is fiery, when religion is enthusiastic, when piety is passionate, then you have the very fire from the altar of God, in which all uncleannesses are purged away. There is a phrase used by the prophet Isaiah which always appears to me to be pregnant with a profound truth of religious experience: "The Lord shall wash away their filth . . . by the spirit of burning." What is to be the cleansing agency? A "spirit of burning," a baptism of fire? A flame shall be kindled in the life, and in the "spirit of burning" the moral filth, which nothing else could remove, shall be consumed away. Have we not had abundant evidence of this washing by burning in all ages of the Christian Church? There is Mary Magdalene—poor, wretched, unclean Magdalene, possessing in herself no cleansing ministrant to cleanse away

her filth. Judaism can offer a baptism of water, but the baptism of Judaism leaves the deeper plague untouched. And she comes to the Master, and the Master pities her, and she loves Him for His pity, and her love brings into her life the redeeming forces of the atoning God.

That personal love for the personal Christ was the fire that cleansed her; "the spirit of burning" in which her filth was washed away. In Mary's heart was begotten a passionate love for the Christ and her chaff was burnt up with unquenchable fire.

It is even so to-day. In personal and in corporate life we shall be cleansed by the "spirit of burning." We march to holiness through fire. Like the air, the water, and everything else in the world, the heart, too, rises the higher the warmer it becomes. "Because he hath set his love upon me"—what? "I will set him on high." Elevation of character depends upon warmth of affection. Here, then, is the secret why the Church is not radiant with the white robes of a sanctified life, and is still found wearing the grey, compromising garments of the world. The temperatures of the world and the Church are too much akin, and the uncleanness which is natural to the one still clings to the other. The Church must rise above the world by the elevating force of her own internal heat. The Church will lose her worldliness when she gains the "spirit of burning." She will put on an unearthly beauty when she loses the spirit of a cold discipleship, and is baptized with the fire of passionate love for the personal Christ.

But this is not all. An enthusiastic religious life is not merely the only saving religious life, it is the only religious life that is safe. The defensive energy of character is born out of its own heat. The self-preserving power of a virtue is in direct proportion to the passion with which it is pursued. Honesty, pursued reluctantly, has but little resisting power against the freezing influence of the world. Truth, pursued with luke-warmness, is easily chilled into expediency and compromise. A virtue must have a core of heat if it is to be in any worthy measure self-defensive. And that is the strength of the enthusiastic soul. A fiery heart, by the energy of its own heat creates a self-preserving atmosphere against the devil. Cold hearts and luke-warm hearts have no protective atmosphere; their discipleship lacks inherent energy, and is as salt without savour, principle without passion, coals without fire, good for nothing! The energy of our passion is our defence! That is a striking and suggestive phrase of the Old Testament Scriptures, "Clad with zeal as a cloak"—zeal clinging about us like a protecting vesture, our defence a garment of fire! The phrase enshrines a truth which has received confirmation in every age of the

Christian Church. Lukewarmness is never safe. A man's defences are gone when he loses his zeal. A chilling and benumbing worldliness steals in upon the Church when she loses her vesture of fire. The only safety for you and for me and for all men is that we be baptized with fire, enwrapped in an atmosphere of protective zeal, and that we lay aside our cold or lukewarm discipleship to an "ism," and become possessed with a passionate, enthusiastic love for the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How is this baptism of fire to be obtained? How is this spiritual enthusiasm to be kindled; and, when kindled, how is it to be kept burning? These questions are by no means impertinent. Our modern church-life abounds in externalism, in welcome and beneficent externalism; but I think there are few of us who are not sensible of a danger lest the wide divergencies of our interests should diminish and impoverish the intensity of our devotion. How did our fathers keep the fire burning? There are some words which one finds very frequently in their letters, and diaries, and sermons, which awaken similar feelings to those aroused by types of extinct species which are sometimes unearthed from the deposits of a far-off and unfamiliar age. Here are two such words, "meditation" and "contemplation"; words which appear to suggest an unfamiliar day when the world was young, and haste was not yet born, and men moved among their affairs with long and leisurely strides. Our fathers steeped their souls in meditation. They appointed long seasons for the contemplation of God in Christ. And as they mused the fire burned. Passion was born of thought. What passion? The passion which Faber so beautifully describes as the desire which purifies man and glorifies God:—

*Nought honours God like the thirst of desire,  
Nor possesses the heart so completely with Him;  
For it burns the world out with the swift ease of fire,  
And fills life with good works till it runs o'er the brim.*

We live in a busy, perspiring time, with a thousand clamant calls assailing us on every side; but if we are to be possessed by this fiery thirst of desire, this enthusiastic longing for God, we shall have to provide the conditions out of which the passion is born. We shall have to make time to contemplate God. The spirit of meditation must be reintroduced into our fruitless feverishness, and our passion for things transformed into a thirst for God. Our activities are in danger of bustling out our passivities. The spirit of Mary is being exiled, and the spirit of Martha is predominant. The Church must give herself

time to kindle and time to pray. We must give ourselves time for visions, if we would worthily accomplish our tasks. Let us muse upon the King in His beauty, let us commune more with His loveliness, let us dwell more in the secret place, and the unspeakable glory of His countenance shall create within us that enthusiastic passion which shall be to us our baptism of fire, a fire in which everything unchristian shall be utterly consumed away.

*Oh, then wish more for Him, burn more with desire,  
Covet more the dear sight of His marvellous face,  
Pray louder, pray longer for the sweet gift of fire,  
To come down on thy heart, with its whirlwinds of grace.*

## 10. REST FOR WEARY FEET<sup>1</sup>

"I will give you rest." MATT. 11:28.

One of the youngest of our poets, and in many ways perhaps the most brilliant of them, Mr. William Watson, has given us some beautiful verses which were born in his soul as he stood by Wordsworth's grave. He asks himself what it is in Wordsworth which makes him the sought companion of multitudes, and which has given the poet a place among the immortals. He compares him with many other of our poets, and finds that the excellent glories in which they shone he conspicuously lacks. He has none of "Milton's keen translucent music," none of "Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human view." He has none of "Byron's tempest anger, tempest mirth." He lacks "the wizard twilight Coleridge knew," and "Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine." In all these great poetic treasures, which his peers possess, Wordsworth is wanting. What endowment then had he, of his own, which could make amends for all this lack? Our poet answers, "He had, for weary feet, the gift of rest." That is Wordsworth's wealth—"for weary feet, the gift of rest." His poetry takes the heart, and just bathes and steeps it in an atmosphere of deep quietness and peace. He takes us away from the strife of tongues, and from the hard and jarring noise of city life, away to that quiet land of lakes, on to those still uplands, whose only sounds are the cry of the peewit and the bleating of a wandering sheep. And as you read the poetry, and feed upon its spirit, the stillness of the moorland and the mountain tarn enters in and pervades your soul, and you enjoy a sense of most refreshing peace. He has, "for weary feet, the gift of rest."

Ay, but put down your Wordsworth, and you are back again in the old city. You awake to the hard reality and noise of things, and the still atmosphere of the poem has gone like the fabric of a dream. The old world is as clamorous as ever. Its ways are as rough and stony as ever.

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<sup>1</sup> From *Apostolic Optimism*, George H. Doran, 1914.

Its rude and thoughtless jostlings are as painful and as breathless as ever. Your feet are soon again weary, and your heart is tired and sore. The poet's gift of rest is beautiful and not to be despised. It provides a short holiday for the soul, but only a holiday, a temporary respite, from which it must return to the old monotonous beaten ways, and soon find itself wearied with the old strife, the old care, the old sin. But the soul craves, not merely for a holiday, a temporary tent-life on some poetic hill, but for "a rest that remaineth"—to use the apostolic word—"a rest that remaineth," remaineth even when we are in the midst of strife and trouble and death. That is the rest for which the weary heart craves, and which no poet has it in his power to give. His gift of rest is a holiday, we want the rest of the Eternal, the changeless rest.

But there is Another who claims to have for weary feet the gift of rest. The world is always full of weary feet, and the days of the Nazarene were no exception. The souls that gathered about Him numbered a great many weary ones, tired, self-nauseated, faint. He looked upon them, and saw their weariness, and was moved with infinite pity, and thus appealed to them: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "I will give." How? You remember that other great word he spake on another day: "Not as the world giveth, give I." How does the world give? If the world wished to help a heavy-laden man, it would seek to do it by removing his burden. The world's way of giving rest is by removing a man's yoke. "Not as the world giveth, give I." The world would create a paradise of sluggards. The world's heaven would be a life without burdens. Its gift of rest would be a gift of ease. "Not as the world giveth, give I." That is not His way. The restful life is not the easeful life—life without burdens or yokes. The gift of Jesus is a gift of rest while wearing the yoke, rest while carrying the cross, rest in the very midst of mystery temptation, and strife. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Now, let us look at one or two types of weary feet to which this Saviour will, with infinite gladness, bring the gift of rest. Look around you. Where would you look to find the most weary feet in the city? Where would you find the soul most tired and wearied? You would not necessarily find it in homes that had been the scenes of great and burdensome sorrow. The deepest grief. Through the darkest sorrows the soul can often "walk and not faint." So that I don't think I should seek out the homes of blackest sorrow if I wished to find the most weary life. Where then should we find it? Look at those twelve disciples who were chosen by our Lord. Which of them would you

think experienced the deepest weariness of spirit? Would you single out Thomas, and say that his very proneness to doubt must have often filled him with deep weariness, as he encountered so much that was mysterious and perplexing? Or would you point out John, and say that his clear vision of the ideal life, with all its love and light and truth, must have created a deep sense of weariness as he compared the ideal with the real, and saw how unfriendly the world was to the pure and true? Or would you pick out Peter, and say that a man who was always resolving and always failing must have often sunk into a profound weariness, and felt as though it were useless for his tired and beaten soul to strive any more? I think that each of these disciples must have known at times a really deep weariness of spirit, and yet I would have chosen none of these if I wanted to select the man who experienced the most terrible weariness of all. I should have put my hand upon Judas Iscariot. I should say that he knew seasons of weariness of which the Apostle John could not conceive. And why? Because he was a selfish man, the most selfish heart in the disciple band. There is no weariness like the weariness which gathers round about a selfish heart, and if we could place our fingers upon the most selfish heart in the city, we should have discovered a life that moves with terribly weary feet. Why, such a character is a commonplace in fiction because it is a commonplace in life. Think of any selfish character in fiction whom you can call to mind, and you will find that he moves through discontentments and dissatisfactions and continued unrest. A man who lives entirely for himself becomes at last obnoxious to himself, and that is the awful Nemesis which follows the selfish life. I am inclined to believe that a great deal of the tiredness and weariness of the world perhaps more than we commonly think, is only the sickly loathing and self-disgust arising from a morbid selfishness, however much we may strive to attribute it to something else. Be that as it may, there is one truth which may be proclaimed with absolute dogmatism, that selfishness inevitably tends to create self-nausea and weary feet.

Well, you know what remedy we commonly prescribe for such complaints. What do we say of the selfish man who is weary, discontented, full of jadedness and unrest? What do his fellows say of him? They say: "He wants to get away from himself." It is a very suggestive phrase. A man getting away from himself! For why? For rest! If he could only get away from himself, he would lose that sense of weariness and nausea, and find a pleasing rest. It is only another way of expressing the truth, which is so beautifully worded in one of the hymns we sing, where we pray for "a heart at leisure from itself." "A heart

at leisure from itself!"—a heart that gets away from itself, that does not stay brooding over itself, fondling itself, nursing itself, until it loathes itself in weariness—a "heart at leisure from itself," and by its absence from itself finding strength and rest. Now, listen to the Master: "Come unto Me ye weary, selfish ones, and I will give you rest." And how will He do it? By taking us away from ourselves, by giving us leisure from ourselves, by making us unselfish. When a weary, selfish heart comes to the Saviour, the Saviour meets his need by saying, "Take My yoke upon you." But, Lord, he is tired and weary already; another yoke will crush him. No, No; he has just been carrying himself, and himself only, and that is the heaviest of all loads, heavier than any man can bear. But strange it is, that if he adds another burden, his own burden will become light. That is the mystery of grace, that the burdens of a selfish man are lightened by adding more. "Take my yoke upon you." And what yoke is that, Lord? "The yoke of other people's needs—the burdens of the blind and the deaf, and the lame and the lepers—the burdens of other folk's sorrows—put them on to thy shoulders—take My yoke upon thee—increase thy burden, and thy burden shall become light, and instead of weariness thou shalt find rest." Now, it may be that there are weary hearts among my hearers whose weariness is only the measure of their selfishness, and for them this old world is true. Jesus will give you rest by giving you His yoke; He will add to your burden, and so make your burden light. He will enlarge your thought to take in others, and so give you leisure from yourselves. He will take away your jadedness, and give you His own rest. You "shall run and not be weary," you shall "walk and not faint."

But selfishness, while it accounts for much, does not explain all the weariness of the world. The weariness of selfishness can be expelled by unselfish Christian service. But the unselfish have often weary feet, and crave the gift of rest. Can this Saviour meet the need? Let us look around us. What kind of weary lives do we see? There are the anxious ones. The Master could see many of them in the crowd to whom He was speaking—anxious ones, living in fear of the unknown, not able to rest upon to-day, however bright and fair it be, because to-day so speedily changes into to-morrow, and to-morrow is all unknown. It is this great surrounding unknown which creates our anxiety and feeds it into strength. That dark unknown is the parent of our fears. Well, this anxiety, this continued tension of spirit, produces great spiritual exhaustion. The anxious soul moves with weary feet, and would fain meet with one who had the gift of rest. I say our Master saw these anxious ones among His hearers, and to them He cried, "Come unto

me, ye heavy-laden ones, and I will give you rest." How does He give it? I want you to notice the verses which immediately precede the words that I have quoted. I am afraid we sometimes ignore them because of the magnificence of the promise that follows. But they seem to me to have a very close and vital connection with the promise itself. The Master saw how many souls there were who were troubled and anxious about the unknown. And He knew the great secret which, if accepted, would set their hearts at rest. What did He know? He knew God! If everybody knew God, nobody would be anxious. He knew Him, and would unveil Him! "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." "Come unto Me, ye anxious, laden ones, and I will give you rest. To you shall that dark unknown be filled with the Father's face, and your anxiety shall be changed into assurance and peace."

Have I succeeded in making the connection between these verses plain? The Saviour seems to say, "If they only knew their Father, their anxiety would vanish like cloud-spots in the dawn. I know the Father—I will make Him known to them! Come unto Me, ye anxious ones, and by a wondrous revelation I will give you rest." And so He seeks to turn weariness into rest by the unveiling of the Father. And in what strangely beautiful ways He made the Father known! He told them that to Providence there were no trifles, that God did not merely control great things, and allow smaller things to go by chance. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Nothing is overlooked; all is full of thought and purpose. "Look at that sparrow," He said; "how very lightly you regard it: a cheap thing: two of them sold for a farthing: and yet your Father knows when a sparrow falls! Be not anxious! God is thinking about all things! If the world were moving irrationally, without controlling thought, then anxiety would be natural and pardonable. But all things are happening in the thought of God, and God is Love." That was the revelation the Saviour made; and will any one say that if accepted, it would not end the anxiety of the world, and turn its mind-weariness into rest? To come to Jesus is to take His revelation of the Father, and to live in the inspiration of it, and such inspiration would turn fear into confidence, and confidence into peace. Think of it. Suppose that the sky of our souls, instead of being an "unknown" which might prove treacherous, were a Father's face, gracious and beneficent: and suppose that we lived in "the light of that countenance," and never lost sight of it for a day, don't you think that that would create within us confidence out of which would spring eternal rest? The Apostle Paul accepted the revelation of Jesus, and

lived in it and through it, and when dark days came, he quietly sang, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able." That was just what the Master said, "If only they knew Him, their anxiety would change into an untroubled peace." And here is Paul, confirming the Master's word: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able," and in the days of darkness and persecution he remained steadfast and unmovable, enjoying the very rest of God. "Come unto Me, all ye weary, anxious ones, and I will reveal to you your Father, and in the beauty of the revelation ye shall discover the gift of rest."

## 11. BRINGING HEAVEN TO EARTH<sup>1</sup>

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." MATT. 6:10.

I suppose that to the majority of people these familiar words suggest a funeral rather than a wedding. They recall experiences to which we were compelled to submit but in which we found no delight. They awaken memories of gathering clouds, and gloomy days, and blocked roads, and failing strength, and open graves. "Thy will be done!" They remind us of afflictions in the presence of which we were numb and dumb. And so we have a sort of negative and passive attitude toward the words. We have a feeling toward them as to some visitor we have to "put up with," rather than to a welcome friend whose coming fills the house with life and happy movement. They suggest the cypress and the yew tree, things sullen and gloomy, rather than the coronal attributes of the cedar and the palm.

And so it is that the graces and virtues which are most frequently associated with these words are of the dull and passive order. The grace of resignation is the plant which is most prolific in this bitter soil. Even many of the hymns which sing about the will of God are in the minor tone, and they dwell upon the gloomier aspects of Providence which call for the grace of resignation. I am not unmindful of the fields of sadness which often stretch around our homes like marshy fens. Our circumstances gather about us in stormy cloud and tempest, and the rains fall, and the floods cover our lot in dreary desolation. And we may reverently recall one black night in the days of the Son of Man when in Gethsemane the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and the afflicted heart of the Saviour submitted itself in strong resignation, crying, "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done."

And yet if resignation be our only attitude to the will of God our life will be sorely wanting in delightful strength and beauty. A cypress

<sup>1</sup> From *God Our Contemporary*. Copyright, 1922, by Fleming H. Revell.

here and there is all very well, but not a woodland of them! A yew tree here and there is all very well, but not a whole forest of them! In one of his letters Robert Louis Stevenson has a paragraph which represents an imaginary conversation with his gardener about the black winter green known as Resignation:

*"John, do you see that bed of Resignation?" "It's doing bravely, sir." "John, I will not have it in my garden; it flatters not the eye, and it is no comfort; root it out." "Sir, I ha'e seen o' them that rose as high as nettles; gran' plants." "What then? Were they as tall as Alps, if still unsavoury and bleak, what matters it? Out with it, then; and in its place put a bush of Flowering Piety—but see it be the flowering sort—the other species is no ornament to any gentleman's back garden."*

But then how are we going to get more of the flowering piety into our gardens? I think this is the answer. We shall get it by cultivating a more active and positive attitude toward the will of God. The will of God is not always something burdensome which we have to bear; it is something glorious which we have to do. And therefore we are not to stand before it as mourners only, humbly making our submission, but as keen and eager knights gladly receiving our commissions. The will of God is not always associated with deprivation; it is more commonly associated with a trust. It is not something withheld, it is something given. There is an active savour about it. There is a ringing challenge in it. It is a call to chivalry and crusade. And therefore the symbol of our relation to the will of God is not that of the bowed head, but that of the lit lamp and the girt loin, as of happy servants delighted with their tasks. It is in this positive relationship to the will of God that the will becomes our song, the song of ardent knights upon the road, riding abroad to express the will of their King in all the common intercourse and relationships of men. "Thy will be done on earth!" That is not merely the poignant cry of mourners surrendering their treasures; it is the cry of a jubilant host, with a King in their midst, consecrating the strength of their arms to the cause of His Kingdom. The will of God is here not something to be endured, but something to be done.

How, then, are we to take our share in this commission? How are we to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven? *First of all, by finding out what life is like in heaven.* "As it is done in heaven!" If our privileged commission is to make earth more like heaven it must surely be our first enquiry to find out what heaven is like. Well, what is heaven like? I will very frankly confess to you that I am in no wise helped to answer our question by the so-called spiritualistic

revelations of these latter days. These strange séances with the lights out, and a trumpet on the table, and the rowdy singing, they bring me no authoritative word or vision. The character of the heavenly life that is revealed is so unsatisfying—the glare of it, the garishness of it, its furnishings as of a cheap and tawdry theatre, the utter weakness and insipidity of its utterance—they tell me nothing that I want to know. Its leaders assure me that their revelations are chasing away uncertainties, that they are transforming lean hypotheses into firm experiences, that they are proving the reality of the life beyond, that they are making immortality sure. . . . I am waiting for a revelation of something which deserves to be immortal. I am reverently listening for some word which is both spirit and life. I am listening for something worthy of kinship with the word of the Apostle Paul; nay, worthy of the risen Lord; and what is offered to me is like cheap jewelry in contrast with precious stones and fine gold. Eternal life is to me not merely endless length of line; it is quality of line; it is height, and depth, and breadth; “This is life eternal, to know Thee and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

I therefore turn away from the so-called modern revelations if I wish to know what life is like in heaven. What is life like as it is lived in the immediate presence and fellowship of God? What are the habits of the heavenly community? What is the manner of their affections? What is the nature of their discernments? What are their standards of values? What are their ways of looking at things? What are their quests, and their labours, and their delights? What are their relationships one to another? Is there any answer to these questions? My brethren, if I wish to learn what life is like in heaven, I turn to Him who came from heaven. He made certain tremendous claims, and the very greatness of them arrests my soul and fills me with receptive awe. Let us listen to Him: “No man hath ascended into heaven but He that came down from heaven.” . . . “He that cometh from above is above all; what He hath seen and heard, of that He beareth witness.” . . . “The bread of God is He which cometh down out of heaven and giveth life unto the world.” . . . “I am come down from heaven to do the will of Him that sent Me.” . . . What is that last most wonderful word? It seems to come very near to the way of my quest. I am eagerly enquiring how God’s will is done in heaven, and here is One who claims that He comes down from heaven to do the will of Him that sent Him. He brings heaven with Him. His speech is full of it. He talks about “Your Father in heaven,” He talks about “the treasures in heaven,” and about “the Kingdom of Heaven,” and He uses simile

after simile, and parable after parable, to tell us what it is like. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto . . . is like unto . . . is like unto . . ." The familiar words run like some lovely and inspiring refrain. . . . If I would know what heaven is like I must listen to His word.

But the revelation in Christ Jesus is more than a revelation in words. The Word became flesh, and it was not only something we can hear, it was something we can see. He not only startled men's ears, as with a music which had never before been heard in their grey, unlovely streets, He startled men's eyes as with a light which had never before fallen on sea or land. He not only talked about the heavenly life, He lived it. His life on earth was just a transcript of the life in heaven. As we reverently gaze upon Him we can watch the process of the incarnation. The heavenly is imaged forth in the earthly, and it is taking form in human life and story. Every movement of Jesus spells a word of the heavenly literature. Every feature in Jesus is a lineament of the invisible life. Every gesture tells a story. Every one of His earthly relationships unfolds the nature of the heavenly communion. His habits unveil their habits, His quests reveal their quests. The Eternal breaks through every moment, and the light is tempered to our mortal gaze. The revelation never ceases. It begins in Nazareth and it continues to Calvary, and beyond Calvary to Olivet. You can never catch our Lord in some moment when the divine afflatus has been withdrawn, when the inspiration ends, and when His life drops down to dull and un-suggestive commonplace. Everything in Jesus is a ministry of revelation. He *is* revelation; "I am the Truth." His earthly life reveals the landscape of the heavenly fields. If, therefore, I would know what heaven is like I must listen to the word of Jesus, and with eager, reverent eyes I must follow the Word made flesh.

But let me give this counsel about the quest. When we set about studying the words of Jesus do not let us become entangled in the letter. It is possible to be imprisoned in the words and so to miss the hidden treasure. We are in search of the spirit of the Kingdom of Heaven, we want to know its attitudes, its royal moods, its splendid manners, its principles, its life. We must not, therefore, be deterred and interred in the literalism of the letter. We must seek the hidden treasure in the earthen vessel. We must seek the heavenly wine in the earthly wine-skins. We must seek the beating heart of a simile, the secret vitality of a parable, the holy fire which burns on the innermost altar of the word. We are in search of heavenly principles, principles which we can apply to the humdrum life of earth and so transform it into heaven.

Go, then, in search of the principles of the heavenly life. And whenever you find a heavenly principle, something which controls and orders the life of heaven, write it down in your own words, and regard it as one of the controlling guides of humdrum life. Do the same with the Master's life. What a brief little record it is! I turn away my eyes to my study shelves and I see the life of Lincoln in five large volumes. I then turn to the biography of Jesus, and in the Bible which I am using it covers 107 pages, and in those 107 pages the story is told four times over? How marvellously brief it is, and yet how marvellously pregnant! Go over it with the utmost slowness. You are in search of something more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold. If our Saviour moves, if He turns His face toward anybody, if He looks at a little child, or at someone who is near the Kingdom of Heaven, follow the movement, and watch Him, and challenge your judgment as to its significance. Is the movement a revelation? Is it an earthly segment suggesting a heavenly circle, and can you venture to reverently complete the circle? Thus must we go in search of the heavenly principles, and again when we have found one let us express it in our own words, and write it down as one of the fundamental controls of human life.

And when you have got your heavenly principles, when you have analysed them, and have arranged them in some order, will you have many of them? I think not. Will your notebook be overflowing with entries? I think not. You will probably have just a little handful, perhaps not more than a dozen of them, perhaps only half-a-dozen; but they will be something you can handle, for not only are they the principles of heaven, they are the laws of heaven for our life on earth, they are the fundamental things in the ministry of transformation, and they are to make earth and heaven one. If, therefore, you would know what life in heaven is like, study Him who came from heaven, even the Son of Man Who is in heaven.

Well, now, having found out what life is like in heaven, we must now find out what life is like on earth. What are the facts about things on this planet of ours in which we pitch our moving tents for three-score years and ten? If we are to bring the principles of the heavenly life to mould and fashion our life upon earth we must know what we are about. Is our life on earth in any way like the life in heaven which is revealed in Jesus Christ, or is it very unlike it? We must go in search of the facts. What are the facts? And there you face the difficulty which only an unwearying perseverance can conquer. For, strangely enough, it is far more easy to discover the facts about the life in heaven than to discover the facts about the life on earth. Heaven yearns to

reveal itself, to make itself known, to share its secrets, and it has done these things in Jesus Christ; but earth seeks to hide its facts, to obscure them, to skilfully camouflage them, until it is almost impossible to discover the simplicity of truth in all this elaborate paraphernalia of falsehood and disguise.

How intensely difficult it is to see a thing just as it is, in all the clear, vivid, untampered outlines of sheer veracity! Our newspapers do not really help us in the quest. Their vision is perverted in many ways—it is perverted by political partisanship, by the spirit of class, by the narrowing mood of sect, by the proud domination of wealth, by the desire to please more than to inform. How hard it is to find the facts through the daily press! I take two morning papers, and I have chosen them on the ground of their being as absolutely unlike each other as can be well conceived. I look out upon the world through their two lenses in the fond hope that one may regulate the other, and that in their mutual correction I may arrive at something like the truth. But through what a riot of confusion one has to fight his way if he is to find the fact of things in their simple and transparent order! For instance, the facts about the miners and the owners of the mines! The facts about Prohibition in the United States! The facts about the drinking customs of our people! Where are our working people assembling in vast multitudes to demonstrate their determination to have more drink? Where are the masses of people who are assembling to demand a brighter London, and who are going to secure it by extending the drinking facilities for an hour or two longer at night? What are the facts about things? The facts about the starving populations of Russia! The facts about India, about the inner currents of its thought and feeling, the secret aspirations of its countless multitudes, the sleepless activities of Islam! What a hunt it is, this hunting for facts! And yet, if the heavenly principles are to be brought to earth, to govern and regulate her life, if the crooked is to be made straight and the rough places plain, we must know where the dangerous crookedness is to be found on the road, and where the road is so rough that it breaks the feet of pilgrims and lames them for their honest and necessary journey.

I can well imagine that if the Church of Christ—the whole Church of Christ, were united in life and purpose, if she were really what we sometimes sing she is—a mighty army, not shuffling along any and every road in loose and bedraggled array, but marching under one plan of campaign and moving in invincible strength—I can imagine she would have her own Intelligence Department, her own secret service, her own exploring eyes and ears, peering everywhere, listen-

ing everywhere, knowing the most hidden facts of the nation's life, and proclaiming them from ten thousand pulpits in every part of the land. But while we wait for the united Church of Christ we must not go to sleep. Young people must strenuously and untiringly seek to get at the facts. How is it with old mother-earth? Is she full of the glory of God? Or is she full of shameful things, crooked things, wasteful things, wicked things? Is her life really vital, or is it superficial, artificial, a poor withered, wrinkled thing hidden in powders and cosmetics? What are the facts? Knowing what life is like in heaven find out what life is like on earth. Get at the facts.

And now for a last thing. Having a firm grip of divine principles—"as it is in heaven," and with a clear knowledge of earthly facts—"as it is done on earth," then with fearless application bring your principles close to your facts, and make your facts bow to your principles, reshaping them by the heavenly standards so that the crooked becomes straight and the rough places plain. Bring the heavenly close to the earthly, and change every earthly thing into heavenly currency, stamping it with the divine image and superscription. "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!" That is gloriously positive work. It is challenging work. It is exhilarating work. It is work which is worthy of the knights of God. It is to bring heaven and earth together until the two become one. It is to bring the heavenly to the earthly, to bring divine principles into the region of economics, into the realm of business, it is to bring them into the thicket of politics, to the simplification of society and to the reconstruction of international relationships.

"It can't be done!" What is that? "It can't be done!" What can't be done? "You cannot mix the heavenly and the earthly; you cannot wed them into vital union. Religion is religion, and business is business, and never the twain shall meet. Religion is religion, and politics is politics, and to try to marry the two is to seek a covenant between oil and water. You cannot bring religion into commerce, and let the heavenly visitor settle the height of the tariff wall, or remove it altogether. No, religion is religion, and trade is trade! There was no chair for Religion in the Council Chamber at Versailles; she was not expected, she was not really invited. And if, by any chance, she had appeared and spoken she would have been pathetically out of place." "But why would she have been out of place?" "Oh, well, everything in its place; and Versailles was the place for the stern soldier, the astute and wily diplomatist, the subtle politician; it was no place for the saint! You cannot have a coalition between Christ and Caesar. It can't be done!"

"Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," Jesus Christ said it could be done, and that is the end of it. Nothing is expected from the heavenly claim. God claims everything. There is no confusion at the heart of things. There is one Intelligence in the universe, one central Will, one great White Throne. God's decree runs through all things, and His holy will is best in everything. What is good religion can never be bad business. What is rotten religion can never be sound economics. What is morally right can never be politically wrong. "Thy will be done on earth!" That is the right road in everything. On that road alone can true life be found, the abiding secret of vital progress and happiness. Then let us firmly grasp the divine principles revealed to us in Christ, let us fearlessly apply them to every sort of earthly facts, let us mould the facts according to the pattern which we have found in the holy Mount.

But let us remember this. These words of our Master are first of all a prayer before they become a commandment. Our hands are to be uplifted in supplication before our feet begin their journey. We are to fall to our knees before we take to the road. It is first a prayer, then a crusade, and then a victory. "Thy will is done on earth as it is done in heaven."

## 12. WEATHER-WISE BUT NOT HISTORY-WISE<sup>1</sup>

"And He said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" LUKE 12:54, 55, 56.

"Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time?" What is the Master's indictment? It is this—these people were weather-wise, but they were not history-wise. They could read the face of the sky; they could not read the face of the past. They could interpret the movements of winds and clouds, but they could not interpret the movements of the human race. "Ye can discern the face of the sky." They had become familiar with certain successions in the natural world. If they saw one thing in the sky they would instinctively relate it to another. When one sort of thing came along they inevitably looked for something else. If a cloud arose in the west, they said, "There will be rain." The cloud in the west had always been the harbinger of the shower. The two always travelled together. They were a married couple in nature, and they moved in fellowship and union. If a wind came travelling from the south, they said, "There will be heat," and their expectation was fulfilled. The two always went together. And thus it came about that these natural successions determined their practice. If the south wind began to blow they took to lighter clothing; if the north wind was about they got out their wraps. And they did all this with perfect assurance. The sequence was certain. The north wind never came laden with fire, and the south wind was never the bearer of snow and ice. They could trust the succession.

How did they know these things? How had they come to be able to read the face of the sky? They had learnt it from experience, from common reasoning, from processes of deduction and inference. Their

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<sup>1</sup> From *God Our Contemporary*. Copyright, 1922, by Fleming H. Revell.

observation and reasoning had taught them that two things were never found together, the north wind and warmth, and that another pair of things were never found apart, the south wind and the heat. This observation had been so often repeated that at length they came to regard the association as fixed and natural. The observation was therefore translated into a principle, and the principle found expression in daily action. They had studied natural sequences, and the sequences were so constant that they had come to regard them as cause and effect. The south wind, which yesterday came laden with tropical heat, will not change its freight to-day and come laden with arctic cold. The north wind, which a week ago carried the breath of ice, will not stultify itself this week, and become the messenger of the sirocco, and scorch the face of the earth with burning heat. No, the succession abides. The readings are continuous. "Ye can discern the face of the sky and the earth." The natural history of yesterday will rightly interpret natural happenings to-day.

But now Jesus Christ expresses Himself in great surprise. He is surprised that men's powers of observation, which are so keen and penetrating in one direction, should be so dull in another. He is surprised that while men are so alert in interpreting one sort of phenomena they should be so blind and sluggish in interpreting another. The Lord teaches that these fixed successions in nature have their analogies in other fixed successions in the lives of men. He bids the people mark and observe how things happen in history, what things follow what things, and to note how the fixedness of the succession is never broken. He tells them to look at their yesterdays, and at the yesterdays of the race, and they will find that things appear or disappear in a very definite order, and the order is never confused. There are certain kinds of happenings which are as sure in their retinue as is the certainty that the south wind will bring heat; and there is another kind of happenings as sure of their train as that the north wind brings cold. Look at history, says our Lord. Observe it closely. You will find that some things never go together. They are mutually repellent. They never marry. They never go in pairs. If you have one of them you may be perfectly sure the other is missing, just as when the north wind blows you will be sure that the heat is away. Watch the order of things in history, says the Lord. Study how they come and go. The order is constant and unbroken. Read the face of the past.

And so, in the light of this teaching, human happenings are more than detached events; they are prophecies and predictions. We are intended to know, when one thing happens, what will follow it. Yes-

terday's happenings should shape our expectations to-day. What has been will be. There is no caprice. History presents us with certain fixed successions; these successions prevail to-day, and we do not alter or delay them by merely ignoring them, any more than if we ignore the south wind we change its torrid heat to the cold rigours of the northern blast. No, history, which is the story of human experience, records certain definite relations, and we shall inevitably find these relations are repeated and exemplified in our life to-day.

But the trouble is, according to Jesus, that we are weather-wise, and we are not history-wise. We read one face, the face of the sky, and we ignore the other face, the face of the past. And so we go muddling and bungling along, in private life or in public life, as if, by some strange chance, the south wind will bring a cool breeze from the ice-fields, or the north wind will bring a warm, quickening influence from the tropical home of heat and flame. We act blindly as though yesterday had no fixed lessons. We are dull to historic sequences. We ignore the findings of experience. We turn our eyes from the face of the past. And thus it happens that while we can interpret the movements of the skies we are unable to interpret the signs of the times. "When ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye can discern the face of the earth and the heaven; but how is it ye do not discern this time?"

Well, what kinds of fixed successions does experience present to us? What sort of relations are they of which we can say, "This is a fixture; it is as sure as the relation of the south wind and heat and of north wind and cold." Are there any principles which register successions that are as fixed in their processes as the process of nature, and which are as unfailing as the holiness of God? Let me name one or two findings of human experience; they are examples of many, many more, but I think that these seem to be especially clamouring for recognition in our own day. I shall ask if our eyes are blind to their gestures, and if our ears are deaf to their appeal.

Let this, then, be the first example. *History teaches that in all human conflict and controversy no victory is finally effective which does not capture the ramparts and citadel of the soul.* Is that a teaching of experience? What is the teaching again? The teaching is this—we never win a man until his heart is won. The energies of any personality follow in the train of the surrendered heart. If the heart be missed the man escapes. Capture the heart, and you capture the life. I say that this is a succession taught on every page of history. It is a line graven deep on the recording plate of human experience. Have we learnt the

lesson? Have we traced that lineament on the face of the past? Or are we ignoring the teaching, and seeking to win folk by some other method than the established one of winning the heart?

Suppose we lasso a man or a people by means of a law, and rope them into legislative compounds, what does history say about it? History says we shall never win them. There is no known succession of that order. The secret of personality can never be seized and held in the leash of a statute. No, we can never by bare law win the heart of anybody, or of any people, whether the people be British, or Irish, or Negro, or the dwellers in the Cameroons. Law leaves the spiritual citadel of man untaken and unpossessed. That is the unfailing teaching of experience.

Well, then, suppose we try another sort of constraint. Let us try the finer cords of reason. Very well, then, let us seek to capture the life of man in finely woven nets of reasoning. Let us capture him in the meshes of logic. Let us argue him into silent fellowship and obedience. Is the man now won? Has experience any record upon it? Is there any suggestion in the face of the past to throw a light upon the problem of the present? Yes, the teaching is perfectly clear. Logic no more reaches and holds the central secret of man than the north wind brings heat. Arguments do not storm the central keep of the soul. Arguments may capture the mind while the life escapes. That is the teaching of experience. The personality is not led in that succession. Why, my brethren, so far as the religion of Christ Jesus is concerned, if argument could make us captive the vast majority of people would have been enthusiastic disciples long ago. But a convinced mind does not imply a surrendered life. The reason may surrender while the heart withdraws. "These people draw nigh unto Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."

Try another sort of constraint. Law may coerce a man's will. Argument may capture his mind. The deeper thing has not yet been reached. Let us, then, attempt a deeper possession by seeking to wake his admiration. If we can rouse a man's admiration we are dealing with much finer and much more vital energies. Law may imprison us in its restraints and yet leave us cold. Reason may convince us and yet leave us cold. But admiration has warmth in it, and the warmth springs from deeper fires. Therefore rouse the admiration and you are dealing with more essential things.

But what does experience tell us about this? It tells us quite clearly that we do not win a life when we only win its admiration. It tells us that the soul does not surrender in the line of its admiration. We

can admire where we do not love. Appreciation may wander forth while affection lingers behind. We may admire Jesus and yet not give Him our heart. An admirer need not be a lover. That is the teaching of experience. Nay, I think the teaching is even more definite than that. I think we are taught that the full personality of a man never really marches with bare admirations. You need something more if the really vital thing is not to be left behind.

"We live," says Wordsworth, "by admiration." Yes, but Wordsworth does not stop there. Let us finish the sentence. "We live by admiration, hope and love," and here we touch the secret. It is when the admirer becomes a lover that the entire personality begins to move; all its powers become like the members of a glorious band of music in cooperative strength, and grace, and harmony. Win the love, and every current in the life begins to flow towards you. Win the heart and you capture the life. It is so in friendship. It is so in marriage. It is so in the life of a people or a race. Capture the heart and the castle surrenders. And so this is our call as this is our crusade; we are to win the hearts of mankind. We have to think, and speak, and act, so as to capture the hearts of men. We have to capture the Irish heart, the Negro heart, the Hindoo heart, the German heart. Nothing else will suffice. Anything else will leave us in tragical arrears. Experience shouts this warning from a thousand different roads. History records this lesson in every chapter, and on every page. If you would win a life go for the heart. That is the unfailing witness of the past. "Ye can discern the face of the sky and the earth; how is it ye do not know how to interpret our time?"

And now let me present a second collateral lesson from the teachings of history. And the lesson is this—*Material forces can never win moral and spiritual victories*. Is that perfectly sure? Yes, it is just as sure as that a wind from the arctic regions never carries the heat of fire, or that a tropical wind is not freighted with the frost. Have we learned the lesson? Or are we deaf and blind to this particular teaching of the past? Do we indifferently ignore it, or do we believe it? What is the lesson? Material forces can never win moral and spiritual victories. Are we assuming that they can? And does our belief regulate our ways and our manners, our behaviour in private, and our management of the state? For instance, in the administration of our prisons are we assuming that material forces can win moral and spiritual victories? Are we assuming that an over-awing carnal power can remake and reshape the characters of men? I freely confess that some of the most miserable experiences I have had in my public life

have been associated with visits to prisons, when it has fallen to my lot to go and see men who were confined for crime, whether it were in this country or in the United States. Believe me, everything is frightfully oppressive. You feel the crushing weight of material tyranny, and it holds you like a chain. Everything suggests a brutal sovereignty from which you cannot escape. Everything wears the face of mastery, every door, every wall, every window, every passage, every bar, every lock —everything wears the face of mastery, and it is a very grim and tyrannical face. It stares at you everywhere, and it stares you down.

Well, what are we after? Are we assuming that material forces will win moral and spiritual victories? Then we are flying straight in the face of the teachings of history. There is no such succession known to experience, and we cannot create it, any more than we can make a hard, glaring, pitiless sky yield genial showers of rain. If prison-life is to be remedial as well as punitive, if it is to be the scene of human transformation, other elements must enter into the servitude. And I have seen these other elements at work, effecting the blessed ministry of moral and spiritual renewal. I have seen them at work in that fearfully dismal bastille called Sing Sing, that dark spot on the fair banks of the Hudson, about thirty miles out of New York. When Governor Osborne took charge of that penal settlement, he determined to introduce more humane constraints into the captivity. He would soften the hard material forces with forces of superior order. A little chivalry in the government should touch the wretched victims. And so he set to work. The spirit of confidence supplanted the spirit of mistrust. A little kindness tipped the harsh command. A more genial air breathed over the bleak compound. Wings were added to leaden feet, and discipline was charged with aspiration. Material forces were pervaded with humanity, and the entire life had windows opened upon new possibilities, upon glimpses of better and larger days. I remember one incident as I walked round the prison with the Governor. He put his hand on the shoulder of one of the convicts and said with genuine geniality, "Well, John, and how are you getting on?" The man addressed was "in" for fourteen years. He was a little man, but I think I saw him add a cubit to his stature. And were there any moral and spiritual victories? Was that the succession? Does the south wind bring heat? Does the cloud from the west bring the shower? The moral renewal came with the action of the finer powers. Material forces cannot produce them. A chain can never redeem. A padlock can never convert. An army can never renew. The material bond can never establish moral convictions. Have we learned that lesson? Or

down a thousand roads are we ignoring the teachings of history and experience? "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west straightway ye say, There cometh a shower, and so it is. Ye can discern the face of the sky; how is it that ye know not how to interpret the time?"

What other succession does experience present to us? Let me mention this as I close—*We release the best in ourselves when we release the best in others.* In all your observations have you observed that staring sequence? One follows the other as surely as the south wind brings the treasures of the heat. It is an inviolable succession. When we do the one thing we accomplish the other. It is a law of life. And what is it? That when we busy ourselves in liberating the best in others our own best begins to emerge. We ourselves are more fully emancipated as we seek another's freedom. We ourselves are warmed at the fire which we kindle for another. But do we believe it? Have we learned that lesson until the knowledge has become an instinct and a bias in our lives? Are we absolutely certain that when we are enticing some buried faculty out of its grave in another man we are cultivating the self-same faculty in ourselves?

For if this be true, let us note the inferences. Here are some of the inferences. Healthiness comes from helpfulness. We find ourselves through our brother. Open out a spring of joy in somebody else and a similar spring begins to flow in you. Help your brother to find his wings, and wings at your shoulders begin to play. Nourish his faith and you gain in spiritual apprehension. Make a truth more vivid to him and it shines in your sky like a star. These are some of the inferences. We dig ourselves out of our own graves by devoting ourselves to the resurrection of others. Tell somebody else the good news of our Father's love; tell it to them till the music fascinates and entrances them, and the blessed harmonies will ring like wedding bells through your own soul.

Have we learned these sequences? They are the bequests of history and experience. Do we believe them as surely as we believe that the south wind brings heat? Have we really and vitally observed the successions, and have the observations become applications in our daily life? What a law of life is here, a law confirmed by a million of yesterdays! "Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; how is it that ye do not know how to interpret this time?"

What, then, is my counsel to young folk who have the spirit of inquiry? It is this. Diligently and prayerfully watch the historic sequences. Watch them with most searching observation. Two and two always make four; see what history has to say about that truth in its

moral applications. Let me urge you to heed these vital successions, to heed and revere them. Be experts in reading the face of yesterday, and bring your reading to interpret the duty and problem of to-day, and then, by the Grace of God, live out the best you have seen, and be more than conqueror in the general life of mankind.

## *II. Meditations*

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### 13. MEDITATIONS FROM THE PSALMS<sup>1</sup>

#### THE MAKING OF A CYNIC

"He sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Ps. 1:1.

This sitting suggests a settled mood. The scorn is not an occasional thing, something that comes and goes, and never tarries long. It has come to stay. It has taken up its home there. There is an air of permanency about it. It is not a swift spasm of ill-feeling, born one moment and destroyed the next. It is a fixed habit. It is a residential feeling; it is a mood which knits the days together and runs throughout the life. The "seat of the scornful" is not a movable chair; it is an abode. This man has sat down to stay. He is not occasionally cynical; he *is* a cynic.

Now, what is a cynic? The etymology of the word introduces the features of a dog. And what is there dog-like about a cynic? A snarl. Who has not known the neighbour's dog which crouches just behind the garden gate and snarls at every passer-by? The passer-by may be a little child, or it may be an old man; it makes no difference, there is a snarl for both. It may be a tinker, soldier, sailor; it is all the same, everyone is snarled at as he goes along the way. No matter how genial your presence, or how cordial your word, or how gracious your errand, there is a bitter snarl for you as you pass the gate.

And that is the dog-like attitude which makes the cynic. He snarls at everything, and he sniffs and he sneers at everything. He is sarcastic and satirical. He is a disbeliever in the inherent worth of things. He has no confidence in the sincerity of others. He has a suspicion of every sort of courtesy, and he has a carping attitude to every social usage. He flings a mocking jibe at everything. He laughs at everything with bitter laughter. He suggests that there is a rotting decay at the heart of every beautiful thing. He cannot look at a flower without talking about the manure at its root. When others are admiring a lovely deed

<sup>1</sup> From *Springs in the Desert*. Copyright, 1924, by Harper & Brothers.

he hints at an unclean motive. Even a mother's love is only an animal instinct, a fierce and merely selfish passion at the very heart of her affection. The cynic penetrates the lovely in search of the unlovely, and he is always sure that he finds it. You can hear his cruel laughter in the loveliest garden. You can hear his mocking cry in the sunny noon, or under the light of the midnight stars. Whatsoever things are ugly, the cynic thinks on these things.

What is the matter with him? He is suffering from a serious heart disease. His heart is soured. Now there is always a direct connection between the condition of the heart and the character of the sight. We cannot be careless about our heart and yet retain the accuracy of our vision. As is the heart so will be the eyes. "Blessed are the *pure* in heart, for they shall *see* God." That is the supreme example of the law, but the law has a hundred negative applications, and every one of them proclaims that a defect in the heart will be registered in a corresponding defect in the sight. If there is moroseness in the heart there will most certainly be perversity in the outlook. If the soul is soured the vision will be veiled, and the veil will be as a tinted lens which confuses the natural colours of all things. Suppose you look at the world through a yellow pane of glass. Why, then you have a yellow world. Suppose you look through a dirty pane of glass. Why, then everything is defiled. Suppose you look at everything through the yellow pane of jealousy, or the red pane of envy—why, then you disfigure everything. And if you look at things through a soured disposition you will not see anything that is lovely or sweet. The cynical heart has a charmless world.

And how does a man become a soured man, a scornful man, a cynic? The order of the verse in this psalm outlines the process of his creation. The process begins when a man begins to listen to evil counsels—"the counsels of the ungodly." That is to say, he opens his mind in ungodly hospitality, and he lets in the germs of evil conduct. You cannot keep your milk sweet and yet let anything into your dairy; one dirty germ can sour an entire milking. And when an evil counsel is given welcome into a sweet mind, it begins its defiling and souring work. When we begin to cherish low ideals, we speedily begin to act in ungodly ways; we choose our company, we seek the fellowship of the unworthy, we "stand in the way of sinners." There is only one further step in the process, sinful conduct is creative of sinful and settled disposition. Every act helps to create an attitude. Every deed tends to fashion a mood. We are soured by our own misdeeds. We become cynics, and we sit in the seat of the scornful.

I know only one way in which a cynic can be made sweet. He must be born again. Superficial remedies are entirely ineffective. Do what we will we cannot cleanse this dairy! But there is a fountain open for sin and uncleanness: "Lord, if thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

#### GROWING IN IMPRISONMENT

"Thou has enlarged me when I was in distress." Ps. 4:1.

The imprisoning experience becomes the minister of strong and healthy growth. When the Psalmist drew near to the unwelcome circumstance its face was filled with gloomy frowns. When it "gat hold" upon him it seemed to cripple and belittle him. It would surely break him all to pieces! But it turned out to be the means of his enlargement. It seemed to shut him in when it was in reality opening him out. The circumstance looked like an instrument of depression, crushing him into the dust, and it was truly a minister of elevation lifting him into larger circles of life. He was enlarged when he was in distress.

There are untold multitudes of people who have shared the Psalmist's experience. Their life was moving in broad, quiet waters of happy experience, and the glow of contentment filled their hearts from morning until night. And then their life became suddenly contracted, and they were imprisoned in gloomy necessity. Their life had been like a boat, sailing along the free open waters of a canal. The boat passes out of the sunny openness into the deep imprisoning walls of a lock. There is a closed gate in front, and a gate is shut behind. The boat is held in the narrowest and gloomiest confinement. But into the locked circle the waters pour from a higher level, and the boat begins to rise in its imprisonment, and soon the forward gate is opened, and the boat moves out on an elevated plane.

And life has its imprisoning locks. God shuts us in. Doors are closed before and behind us, and it is God's hand which does it. We seem to lose our freedom. We cannot go as we would. We lose the open vision. We lose the inviting vista which stretched before us like a shining hope. And then into our forced seclusion there come the waters of life, and we begin to rise. We may not be conscious that we are rising, but our ignorance does not affect the reality. When God, the merciful Guardian, who watches over Israel, opens the forward gate and restores our freedom, we begin to know what has happened. Life opens out in new and larger reaches. We are on higher planes of being. We have finer powers of discernment. We have a bigger out-

look. We have risen in our adversity, and our God has enlarged us in our distress.

Who has not known people whose sympathies have grown larger in their sorrows? They have begun to think differently. As a sick friend of mine, who had never been sick before, said to me: "My! but things look differently from the horizontal!" Yes, indeed! we begin to think differently about many things, and we begin to think about some things which have never crossed our minds before. We become conscious of grim necessities in the world of which we have never dreamed. We had no idea such things were in existence. A whole world of sickly, suffering folk come into sight. Humanity becomes more than an abstraction; it is a kindred, a brotherhood, and we thrill to new relations as we become the children of a new experience. Our sympathies are enlarged, and they are enlarged when we are in distress.

And so it is with the spiritual world. It often grows upon us when we are laid aside and shut within the narrow circle of distress. We see more of it through our tears. We are brought low and strange new things emerge. I have heard that men who look up from the bottom of a deep pit can see the stars at noon. I do not know about that, but I do know that when men and women are sunk in the pit of adversity and sorrow and look up, stars of promise troop out to bring them cheer. They see wonderful things which once were very far off. And so I begin to see the truth of the old Italian proverb: "When God shuts a door He opens a window."

#### A QUENCHLESS FIRE

"A God that hath indignation every day." Ps. 7:11.

Our sacred fire does not burn every day. It burns only intermittently. It has occasional flares, when it leaps up with fierce intensity, but it soon dies down, and smoulders or goes quite out. It is like a bonfire of tarred wood; it has a spasm of fervency, but no steady and continual glow. When the revelation of some moral outrage first appears we burn with hot antagonism. But if the outrage continues, and we become accustomed to its presence, our healthy indignation begins to subside. Our very familiarity with an evil is apt to damp our fires. The very evil which kindles our anger smothers it by its continuance.

All of which means that there comes a stage where our holiness ceases to be shocked at the presence of the unholy. Our holiness is not healthy enough, and therefore not sensitive enough, to retain its power

of repulsion. It does not possess a glorious sense of offense. It is not strong enough to maintain its distance. What it first loathed it now tolerates, and it is almost inevitable that when we tolerate a wrong we begin to fraternise with it. In this realm the absence of antagonism means the birth of fellowship. Friendly messages pass between the trenches and we begin to cherish what we were intended to destroy. Our very presence, which should have consumed the evil, quickens it, just as a congenial climate fosters some deadly plague.

Now God's holiness is altogether different. His indignation never burns low in the presence of wrong. When iniquity raises its head His light is always lightning. "Out of the throne proceeded lightnings!" God's holiness never tolerates sin. His holiness never becomes so luke-warm as to be amiable to seemingly small revolts. "Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments!" It is jealous for fidelity in small affairs. It is angry with the infidelity that shows its face in the apparent trifle. And why? Because the spirit of outrageous sin can enter the sacred circle through a neglected scruple. The burglar can get into the house through a little unfastened window in the scullery. Smallpox may be spread by a penny as well as by a pound note. And it is little use working up indignation against mighty epidemics if we are coldly negligent about the single germs. But this also is one of our dangers. Our fires blaze in crises, but they do not burn against the smaller things which make them. Our indignation does not burn every day either against great wrongs which have become familiar, or against the lesser wrongs which are the breeding beds of more sensational sins. "God hath indignation every day!" In the presence of wrong God is always aflame. "Our God is a consuming fire." He will not parley with sin, but He will burn it in unquenchable fire.

If we would share His holy fire, we must share His holiness. If we would share His holiness, we must be partakers of His love and grace. To be greatly angry we must have the power to greatly love. "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

#### Two WAYS OF SEEKING REST

"Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." Ps. 55:6.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." Ps. 55:22.

It is surprising that these two sentences are found within the same psalm. They are so unlike each other as to be uncongenial and contradictory. One speaks of seeking rest by flying away; the other speaks

of seeking rest by laying his burden upon God. One method is by flight; the other method is by trust. And these two strangely different things are found within the borders of a single psalm.

There are many other psalms where the changes of thought, and purpose, and emotion are just as revolutionary. Indeed the change is so startling in one or two of the psalms that the transition is considered by some scholars to be forced and unnatural, and they suggest the possibility that perhaps two very dissimilar psalms have somehow been joined together. One was born in the merry month of May, the other was born in a sunless winter month, and somehow or other they have been forced into very unnatural wedlock. But I do not think we need invite an assumption of this kind. Soul-movement is often extraordinarily swift when we get into the presence of God, and these psalms are the audible expression of men who are engaged in divine communion. These men are closeted with the Lord, and it often happens that fellowship which begins in weariness and tears passes quickly into a strangely bright and buoyant joy, like the coming of a blue sky after a heavy thunderstorm, when the flowers reopen again and the birds begin to sing. And so I do not think that the swift transition is unnatural. When the Psalmist entered into communion with the Lord he felt like running away from his appointed task. "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away!" Before he had been long in communion with God, his soul was resting, though in the midst of convulsive circumstance, for he had cast his burden on the Lord.

Flight is never a remedy either for spiritual unrest or spiritual fatigue. We simply cannot run away from our deepest troubles. If we could run away from them it would be true that the gift of God can be bought with money. All that we should need to do would be to put down our money, book our passage, fly to another clime, and the thing is done, and the release is won. No, it simply cannot be done. We can run away from our tasks, but the way of desertion never leads to the fair and sunny realm of peace. "Then would I fly away and be at rest!" Oh no, he would not be at rest; rest can never be found along that road. Restfulness, by which I mean serenity of mind, the deep assurance of union with the ultimate things of life, does not dwell in any place where the deserter makes his home. The deserter's land is full of ironical and satirical presences, and they fill his ways with mocking laughter.

We may fly away from our tasks as Jonah did when he turned his back upon Nineveh and made his way to Tarshish. Jonah said to him-

self, "I will fly away and be at rest." But he found no rest. The stormy seas which he encountered were only the symbol of his own restless and tumultuous life. The task which had been laid upon him was indeed a hard task, and a man might pardonably shrink from the burden. But he should have engaged the will, which he used in flight, in casting his burden upon the Lord, and the Lord who had commanded the task would have borne the load.

Sometimes we try to fly away from our troubles. "I will just go off to California for a few months!" "I will get away to the South of France for a winter!" California and South of France have treasures of sweetness and sunshine, but they are not necessarily the home of God's peace. The ironical sorrow sits on the shoulders of the traveller and goes with him every inch of the way, and in the sunnier clime it throws its disturbing shadow over everything.

This Psalmist wished for wings that he might fly away. There is another man mentioned in the scriptures, who rested in the Lord and found wings. And this was his testimony. "They that wait upon the Lord shall mount up with wings as eagles." But these wings are not for the flight of desertion, they are for the strong and swift ministries of service. "With twain they did fly," but they flew in the way of their appointed task, and they finished the work which God gave them to do.

#### THE GREAT WAYS OF GIVING THANKS TO GOD

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord." Ps. 116:12-14.

But how strange and contradictory it appears! "What shall I render? . . . I will take." One would have supposed that the succession would have been in this wise: "What shall I render? . . . I will give." But the Psalmist has the innermost truth of the matter. The first and best return we can make to God for one of His gifts is to take a larger gift. What shall I render unto the Lord for my daily bread? The vitally essential answer would be this—"I will take of the bread of life." How shall I thank the Lord for His gift of sleep? By taking His greater gift of rest and peace. What shall I render unto the Lord for the gift of health? And here again the first return must surely be in the form of a larger receptiveness. I thank God for my bodily wholeness by accepting His higher gift of holiness. The primary way of showing gratitude for the rain which has watered the parched

ground is by receiving on my dry heart the plenteous showers of grace.

That is surely the way of the Psalmist. He has been contemplating the mercies of the Lord, and he challenges his heart as to what return he can make. "What shall I render? I will take the cup of salvation." He is now going to take the finest thing he can see upon the Lord's table. The Lord always keeps His best wine until the last, and the last of all will never come. Every succeeding gift is better than the one that went before it, and we best honour the Lord when, being thankful for the lesser gift, we joyfully accept the greater one. We do an ill thing to the Lord when we are profuse about His secondary gifts and indifferent about the better things upon His table. "My joy I give unto you." Have I taken that cup yet? "My peace I give unto you." Have I taken that cup yet? "This cup is the new covenant of My blood." Have I taken that cup yet? The first true element in all acceptable praise is the readiness to take a richer gift from God. "What shall I render? . . . I will take."

But that is not the only form of thanksgiving we can make unto the Lord. It is fontal, but it is not final. It is the acceptance of a larger endowment for larger service. And so the Psalmist goes on to say, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord." With his enlarged capital he can now begin to discharge his obligations. He had made a certain covenant with the Lord. When the sorrows of death compassed him he made a vow unto the Lord. When he found trouble and sorrow he made a solemn vow unto the Lord. He said, "If I get over this I will live a more devoted life." He got over it, and now he will keep his covenant.

And who has not made similar vows when the darkness gathered about the soul? "If ever I get my strength back I will use it in the service of His Kingdom." Well, pay that vow. "If ever I get out of this darkness I will take a lamp and light somebody else through the gloom." Well, pay that vow. "If the Lord will only give me the comforts of His grace, I will lead others to the springs of consolation." Well, pay that vow. This man's midnight vow was redeemed in the morning.

## 14. DAILY MEDITATIONS<sup>1</sup>

### THE UNKNOWN JOURNEY

"He went out not knowing whither he went." HEB. 11:6-10.

Abram began his journey without any knowledge of his ultimate destination. He obeyed a noble impulse without any discernment of its consequences. He took "one step," and he did not "ask to see the distant scene." And that is faith, to do God's will here and now, quietly leaving the results to Him. Faith is not concerned with the entire chain; its devoted attention is fixed upon the immediate link. Faith is not knowledge of a moral process; it is fidelity in a moral act. Faith leaves something to the Lord; it obeys His immediate commandment and leaves to Him direction and destiny.

And so faith is accompanied by serenity. "He that believeth shall not make haste"—or, more literally, "shall not get into a fuss." He shall not get into a panic, neither fetching fears from his yesterdays nor from his tomorrows. Concerning his yesterdays faith says, "Thou hast beset me behind." Concerning his to-morrows faith says, "Thou hast beset me before." Concerning his to-day faith says, "Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me." That is enough, just to feel the pressure of the guiding hand.

### TWO OPPOSITES

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

I JOHN 2:13-17.

No man can love two opposites any more than he can walk in contrary directions at the same time. No man can at once be mean and magnanimous, chivalrous and selfish. We cannot at the same moment dress appropriately for the arctic regions and the tropics. And we

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<sup>1</sup> From *My Daily Meditation*, Fleming H. Revell, 1914.

cannot wear the habits of the world and the garments of salvation. When we try to do it the result is a wretched and miserable compromise. I have seen a shopkeeper on the Sabbath day put up one shutter, out of presumed respect for the Holy Lord, and behind the shutter continue all the business of the world! That one shutter is typical of all the religion that is left when a man "loves the world" and delights in its prizes and crowns. His religion is a bit of idle ritual which is an offence unto God!

So I must make my choice. Shall I travel north or south? Which of the two opposites shall I love—God or the world? Whichever love I choose will drive out and quench the other. And thus if I choose the love of God it will destroy every worldly passion, and the river of my affections and desires will be like "the river of water of life, clear as crystal."

#### NOBLE REVENGE

"I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy." Ps. 7:4.

That is the noblest revenge, and in those moments David had intimate knowledge of the spirit of his Lord. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him!"

*Evil for good is devil-like.* To receive a favour and to return a blow! To obtain the gift of language, and then to use one's speech to curse the giver! To use a sacred sword is unholy warfare! All this is devil-like.

*Evil for evil is beast-like.* Yes, the dog bites back when it is bitten. The dog returns snarl for snarl, venom for venom. And if, when I have been injured, I "pay a man back in his own coin," if I "give him as good as he gave," I am living on the plane of the beast.

*Good for good is man-like.* When I requite a man's kindness by kindness! When I send presents to one who loads me with benefits! This is a true and manly thing to do, and lifts us far above the beast.

*Good for evil is God-like.* Yes, that lifts me into "the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Then I have "the mind of Christ." Then do I unto others as my Saviour has done unto me.

#### GOOD AND BAD ROADS

Ps. 1.

There is nothing breaks up more speedily than a badly-made road. Every season is its enemy and works for its destruction. Fierce heat

and intensest cold both strive for its undoing. And “the way of the ungodly” is an appallingly bad road. There is rottenness in its foundations, and there is built into it “wood, and hay, and stubble.” How can it stand? “The Spirit of the Lord breatheth upon it,” and it is surely brought to nought. All the forces of holiness are pledged to its destruction, and they shall pick it to pieces, and shall scatter its elements to the winds.

“I am the way!” That road remains sound “in all generations.” Changing circumstances cannot affect its stability. It is proof against every tempest, and against the most violent heat. It is a road in which little children can walk in happiness and in which old people can walk in peace. It is firm in the day of life, and it is absolutely sure in the hour of death. It never yields! “Thou hast set my feet upon a rock and hast established my goings.” “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

#### PREPARING FOR GREAT ENCOUNTERS

I SAM. 17:28-37.

This young champion of the Lord had won many victories before he faced Goliath. Everything depends on how I approach my supreme conflicts. If I have been careless in smaller combats I shall fail in the larger. If I come, wearing the garlands of triumph won in the shade, the shout of victory is already in the air! Let me look at David's trophies before he removed Goliath's head.

He had conquered his temper. Read Eliab's irritating taunt in the twenty-eighth verse, and mark the fine self-possession of the young champion's reply! That conquest of temper helped him when he took aim at Goliath! There is nothing like passion for disturbing the accuracy of the eye and the steadiness of the hand.

He had conquered fear. *“Let no man's heart fail because of him.”* There was no panic, there was no feverish and wasteful excitement. There was no shouting “to keep the spirits up!” He was perfectly calm.

And he had conquered unbelief. He had a rich history of the providential dealings of God with him, and his confidence was now unclouded and serene. He had known the Lord's power when he faced the bear and the lion. Now for Goliath!

## A FATAL DIVORCE

"They feared the Lord, and served their own gods." II KINGS 17:24-34.

And that is an old-world record, but it is quite a modern experience. The kinsmen of these ancient people are found in our own time. Men still fear one God and serve another.

But something is vitally wrong when men can divorce their fear from their obedience. And the beginning of the wrong is in the fear itself. "Fear," as used in this passage, is a counterfeit coin, which does not ring true to the truth. It means only the payment of outward respect, a formal recognition, a passing nod which we give on the way to something better. It is a mere skin courtesy behind which there is no beating heart; a hollow convention in which there is no deep and sacred awe.

But the real "fear of God" is a spiritual mood in which virtue thrives, an atmosphere in which holy living is quite inevitable. "The fear of the Lord is clean." It is not lip-worship, but heart-homage, a reverence in which the soul is always found upon its knees. And so "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil"; it is an indignant repulsion from all that is hateful to God. It is the sharing of the Spirit of the Lord. There cannot be any true fear where the soul does not worship "in spirit and in truth."

## DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE

MATT. 22:1-14.

*"Stretch forth thine hand!"* But that is just what he was unable to do. His hand was withered. His hand had hung there for years, a rebel to all the commands of the will. The Lord's imperative was the demand of the impossible! Yes, but the man obeyed. "He stretched it forth." What he had been unable to do he did at the bidding of the King.

Christ's commandments are always accompanied by adequate supplies of grace. His commandments are really inverted promises; every one is a true bond that the Lord will provide the needful power for its fulfillment. When we begin to obey we release the power, and we discover that the requisite ability has been given by the gracious Master who gave the call.

Let me, therefore, not fear the decree of the Lord. If "His commandments are exceeding broad," His love is exceeding deep. He will not mock our souls. He will not make us thirst, and then hold the

water beyond our reach. He is faithful who called thee. Rise to obey, in all thy lameness, and thou shalt find that thy feet and ankle bones receive strength.

#### RELATING EVERYTHING TO GOD

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." I COR. 10:23-33.

And so all my days would constitute a vast temple, and life would be a constant worship. This is surely the science and art of holy living —to relate everything to the Infinite. When I take my common meal and relate it to "the glory of God," the common meal becomes a sacramental feast. When my labour is joined "unto the Lord," the sacred wedding turns my workshop into a church. When I link the country lane to the Saviour, I am walking in the Garden of Eden, and paradise is restored.

The fact of the matter is, we never see anything truly until we see it in the light of the glory of God. Set a dull duty in that light and it shines like a diamond. Set a bit of drudgery in that light and it becomes transfigured like the wing of a starling when the sunshine falls upon it. Everything is seen amiss until we see it in the glory! And, therefore, it is my wisdom to set everything in that light, and to do all to the glory of God.

#### THE REAR-GUARD

"Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Ps. 23:6.

But why "*follow*" me? Why not "*go before*"? Because some of my enemies are in the rear; they attack me from behind. There are foes in my yesterdays which can give me fatal wounds. They can stab me in the back! If I could only get away from the past! Its guilt dogs my steps. Its sins are ever at my heels. I have turned my face toward the Lord, but my yesterdays pursue me like a relentless hound! So I have an enemy in the rear.

But, blessed be His name, my mighty God is in the rear as well as my foe. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me!" No hound can break through that defence. Between me and my guilt there is the infinite love of the Lord. The loving Lord will not permit my past to destroy my soul. I may sorrow for my past, but my very sorrow shall be a minister of moral and spiritual health. My Lord is Lord of the past as well as of the morrow, and so to-day "I will trust and not be afraid."

## 15. THE EAGLE LIFE<sup>1</sup>

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles." Isa. 40:31.

I have been reading a recently published Life of Roosevelt and I think that the outstanding sentence in the book is one spoken by Mrs. Roosevelt when the last of her four boys had enlisted in the service of his country. Mr. Roosevelt was just a little daunted when the last, and youngest, left for the Front; but Mrs. Roosevelt said to him, "You must not bring up your children like eagles, and expect them to act like sparrows." It is a royal word: it links itself with some of the great sayings of the Roman mothers, which are still ringing through the years. Her boys had been created for great ventures, and when the call came they went forth as naturally as eagles when they leave their aerie for hazardous flights. And Mrs. Roosevelt's word unveils the true ideal of discipline and training. We are to rear our boys and girls in such largeness and quality of being that they will instinctively do the big thing because they are made and moulded in big ways. They are not to turn to the path of venture with trembling and reluctant choice, but because it is their nature to do it. They are eagle in spirit and they are to take to the vast ways as naturally as they breathe.

And this, too, is the teaching of our Lord. In all His teaching the primary emphasis is on the state of being, and only secondarily upon the issues in conduct. Create an eagle, and you may look for eagle flights. Make the tree good and good fruit will appear in sure sequence. The teaching is expressed in many different ways. "Ye are of your father the devil." Christ lays his finger upon the very substance of their souls, the fibres of their nature, "the works of your father are absolutely sure." What is in will come out. We cannot weave fine robes from rotten fibre. We cannot have pure streams from foul springs. We cannot have exploits from cowards. The sparrow will not take the path of the eagle.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Eagle Life*. Copyright, 1922, by Harper & Brothers.

There are three verbs of very different degrees of value. There is the verb "to have." What a swaggering place it fills in the speech of men! It denominates a man's material possessions. And there is the verb "to do," a word of much more vital significance. It denominates a man's activity and services. Thirdly, there is the verb "to be," which is incomparably more vital than the other two. It denominates the essential nature and character of a man, and its contents reveal his inherent work. Not in what we have, and in what we do, but in what we are is found the real clue to the value of our life. Are we sparrows or eagles? Who is the father of our spirits? Are we partakers of the divine nature? What am I, who am I? a child of dust or a son of God? It is the glory of redeeming grace to change the character and quality of our beings. We can be re-created in Christ Jesus. We can be endued with the powers of endless life. We can have the eagle spirit, and then we shall "mount up with wings as eagles; we shall run and not be weary: we shall walk and not faint."

## 16. SIXPENNYWORTH OF MIRACLE<sup>1</sup>

"A cup of cold water only." MATT. 10:42.

The headline of this meditation is not mine. It belongs to George Gissing. And this is how it occurs. Gissing was going along the road one day, and he saw a poor little lad, perhaps ten years old, crying bitterly. He had lost sixpence with which he had been sent to pay a debt. "Sixpence dropped by the wayside, and a whole family made wretched. I put my hand in my pocket, and wrought sixpennyworth of miracle!"

I think Gissing's phrase is very significant. It suggests how easily some miracles can be wrought. How many troubled, crooked, miserable conditions there are which are just waiting the arrival of some simple, human ministry, and they will be immediately transformed! It is surely this kind of miracle-working ministry which our Lord commends when He tells us of the service rendered by the gift of a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple. It is something which everybody can do, and yet it works a miracle, for it transforms the world of a weary traveler, changing his thirst into satisfaction, his faintness into strength, and his weariness into liberty and song. The miracle costs less than sixpence. A cup of cold water only, and behold! all things become new.

John Morel, Mayor of Darlington, was passing through the town and met a fellow citizen who had just been released from gaol, where he had served three years for embezzlement. "Hallo!" said the Mayor, in his own cheery tone, "I'm glad to see you! How are you?" Little else was said, for the man seemed ill at ease. Years afterwards, as John Morel told me, the man met him in another town, and immediately said, "I want to thank you for what you did for me when I came out of prison." "What did I do?" "You spoke a kind word to me, and it changed my life!" Sixpennyworth of miracle! A cup of cold water!

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Friend on the Road*. Copyright, 1922, by Harper & Brothers.

A new world! Iam Maclareen used to carry in his pocket a very well-worn letter, which had been sent to him by one of his poorest parishioners, and which he read again and again, and in many a changing season, and always with renewed cheer and inspiration. It was just a miracle-working letter written by an obscure parishioner who scarcely realised that she was doing anything at all. Just a cup of cold water only, but it proved to be a fountain of life.

But away and beyond all such services as these, what ministries are in our hands for working miracles in the wonder-realm of prayer! We can take sunshine into cold and sullen places. We can light the lamp of hope in the prison-house of despondency. We can loose the chains from the prisoner's limbs. We can take gleams and thoughts of home into the far country. We can carry heavenly cordials to the spiritually faint, even though they are labouring beyond the seas. Miracles in response to prayer! And yet we will not pray! We will not pray! And the great miracles tarry because we will not fall in supplication upon our knees.

## 17. INCREASE AND DECREASE<sup>1</sup>

"He must increase, and I must decrease." JOHN 3:30.

And yet that very decrease is the secret of sure growth. This sort of decrease is really a making of room for Christ. Our self-importance shrinks, and we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. It is when we are full of self, self-opinionated, self-centred, self-seeking, that Christ is crowded out. That was the deadliness of much of the pharisaism in the time of our Lord. The life of the Pharisee was chock-full of self. Self ran over. It was like a warehouse which is so crowded that part of the stuff is piled outside around the door. You could not go near a Pharisee without running against his egotism. You were always touching his pride. It bulged out in everything, even in his prayers. "I thank Thee that I am not as other men; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes." There is no room there for the Saviour. The house is too full. It is crammed with swelling self-conceit. That was the deadly element in the life of the Pharisee. He would not decrease. He would not become poor in spirit. And so, perhaps, in a very wide sense we may say that increase in the Christian life consists in making room for Christ. And if we knew it, it is in this one thing that we have the secret of everything. For even in the Christian life we are apt to cumber ourselves with many things. We may have too many rules. We have rules for this, and rules for that, and rules for the other. And it is like having a multitude of rules for playing golf. "Fifteen rules for the approach shot! Twenty rules to observe on the green!" And what a muddle we should make of it! And I am little or no better when I try to follow some books of devotion. Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living" puts me into bonds. "Twenty rules to observe in prayer"! "Twenty rules for the cultivation of charity"! And so on, and so on. I am over-harnessed. Nay, the harness burdens me more than

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Friend on the Road*. Copyright, 1922, by Harper & Brothers.

my appointed load. So I return very eagerly to Him who said, "Come unto Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Well, this is the one great secret in the Christian life—making room for Christ. The royal way is just to decrease in everything, and to let His increase be our strength and glory. Suppose we concentrated on that and put all other rules on one side. Let the concentration be detailed and particular. I mean, break up life's days and take each circumstance as it comes, whether it be grave or gay, large or small. Let us meet each circumstance in this attitude, and with this spirit: "In this particular circumstance I must make room for Christ. He must increase, and I must decrease. It must be filled with His presence, and the happening must now and hereafter be fragrant with His grace." Surely this would make the long range of daily events one radiant line of consecration.

That seems to have been the way of the Apostle Paul. Here is his secret; "For to me to live is Christ." What is that but making room for Christ in everything? And here he states the secret again: "I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me." Self decreases almost to the point of extinction—"Not I"—the apostle becomes complete in Christ. And so our hymn gives us the appointed attitude and aspiration:

*O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,  
And all things else recede.*

## 18. TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS<sup>1</sup>

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels." II COR. 4:7.

What treasure? The "light of the glory of God." But why put such a resplendent treasure into commonplace earthen vessels? In order that we may not think more of the vessel than we do of the treasure it contains. It is possible for a man to think more about the binding of a book than of the truth which the book reveals; and so God often enshrines His truth in books of very poor and unattractive binding. God likes to show His loveliest flowers in very plain and commonplace pots. He likes to put a handful of His jewels into an almost forbidding casket. He likes to kindle the light of His glory on very ungainly lamps. And why? That the treasure may not be eclipsed by the fascinations of the vessel which holds it; that the truth may not be obscured by the personal or social grandeur of the man who proclaims it; that the divine may not be lost in the boastful protrusion of the human; "that the exceeding greatness may be of God, and not from ourselves." Let us look for examples of this method of Providence in the broad field of human life.

i. God puts His treasure into earthen vessels *when He kindles the prophetic fires in the heart of a nobody*. How innumerable have been the instances where God has chosen a nobody to be the prophet of his time! Look back. Away yonder, far back in the history of Israel, the nation is riotous and full of sin, abounding in cruelty and injustice and superstition. Into this people must be brought the consuming fire of the divine word. Who shall be the vessel to bear it? On the hills of Tekoa there wanders a lonely herdsman following his flock. He is unknown to the grandees of the metropolis, and when he shall stand in their spacious squares his appearance will betray him as a green-horn from the country. Yet this rough and unkempt herdsman, made of very common clay, was chosen to be the bearer of the treasure of the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Folly of Unbelief*, Fleming H. Revell, 1906.

Take the Book of Revelation, through which you get glimpses into the very heart and home of God. In what kind of magnificent casket were these magnificent visions reposed? In the heart of a fisherman named John, who had one day been found by the Lord, "with James his brother," as they were in the ship "mending their nets." He was chosen to be the bearer of revelations whose deep and far-reaching splendours have even yet not been all disclosed. The treasure was put into an earthen vessel.

In the last century, and especially in its early years, our own nation was deeply sunk in moral apathy and spiritual death. Yonder, at the Bell Inn, Gloucester, standing behind the bar as a common drawer, is a young fellow named George Whitefield, and he is the chosen vessel to bear the treasure of prophetic truth. Truly a very earthen vessel, of very common clay; but in him was kindled the fire of the Holy Ghost, by whose burning the iniquity was consumed in innumerable hearts.

2. The Lord puts His treasure into earthen vessels *when He puts the power of the Holy Ghost into so-called foolish and contemptible speech.* It is possible to have a golden casket of eloquence, and yet for that golden casket to contain no treasure, no power of the Holy Ghost. Eloquence may be a wind-bag. Stammering lips may be burdened with the very fullness of God. I do not wish to disparage the great ministry of eloquent speech; I believe that God often puts His apples of gold into pictures of silver, and His beautiful revelations into beautiful speech. But I wish to emphasize the peril that the golden vessel may draw attention to itself, and fix the admiration there. Eloquence may point to itself, while "contemptible speech" may point to God. Some of our Easter cards have pictures of the cross all wreathed in exquisite flowers. You think more of the flowers than you do of the cross. And a speaker may bury his Lord in flowery language, so that we pay compliments to the speaker when we should be worshipping his Lord. Thus the Lord chooses the plain, unlettered man, who cannot paint flowers and speak them, the rough, uncultured man who can just put out his finger and point to the King.

3. The Lord puts His treasure into earthen vessels *when He puts His strength and beauty into bodies of decrepitude and weakness.* Paul was satirized as having a "bodily presence" which was "weak." It was a characteristic criticism from a nation of athletes. God sent to the Greeks a diminutive-looking Jew, small and insignificant. The treasure was put into a most frail and ungainly vessel. How often it happens that 'the light of the glory of God' shows most splendidly through the

invalid of the family! What an amazingly beautiful treasure was put into the frail vessel of Frances Ridley Havergal!

The Lord loves to use "the weak things," and "things that are despised." He loves to put the treasure of His grace into the feeble, that the world may be compelled to ask, "Whence hath this man this power?"

## 19. SPIRITUAL INSIGHT<sup>1</sup>

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord." Isa. 6:1.

Here is Isaiah. Before his call and consecration he had lived on the political plane of life. His thought was ever moving among the forces of diplomacy and statecraft. The national problem was to Isaiah a political problem. The ultimate foundation of national prosperity was strong and stable government. The wise handling of political forces was the one essential for the continuity and grandeur of the nation's life. That was the plane of thought and life on which Isaiah moved, and on that plane he must find his heroes. He found the hero in Uzziah. Uzziah was the embodiment of political smartness—a sagacious administrator, a man of vision and brilliant diplomacy. So he became Isaiah's hero. What then? He had won Isaiah's admiration. What next? Next he won his confidence, next his love, next his devotion; *then Uzziah became Isaiah's god!* Uzziah filled the whole of Isaiah's vision. How now did Isaiah's reasoning run? Thus: "What will become of the world when Uzziah dies? When the master of statecraft is gone, in whose hands will the rulership rest? When the political nave is removed, will not all the spokes of the national wheel fall into the direst confusion?"

Such was Isaiah's fear, begotten by his hero-worship. Well, Uzziah died. What then? Let us read the record. "In the year that king Uzziah died"—what? "All my worst fears were abundantly realized?" No, no. "All the world's affairs were plunged into chaos and discord?" No, no. "In the year that king Uzziah died I had my eyes opened. I saw there was a greater kingdom with a greater king—I saw the Lord." When king Uzziah was removed from his vision, Isaiah saw that king Uzziah was not the ultimate power, but that behind him, high and lifted up, was the Lord God Almighty. The revelation gave to Isaiah an enlarged conception of all things. It gave him a new centre for his

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Folly of Unbelief*, Fleming H. Revell, 1906.

thoughts and life. It taught him that the ultimate security of all national greatness rests not in thrones and crowns, but in God. It taught him that big armies, and walled cities, and subtle diplomacy are not the fundamental forces on which the welfare of mankind rests. The originating centre of all true and enduring life is not diplomacy, but holiness—not Uzziah, but the Lord.

Surely that is a lesson for to-day—that national foundations must not be laid by Uzziah, but by the Lord; that material forces must be kept secondary, because they are transient; and that the spiritual must be exalted, as being primary and eternal. To-day men are labouring with both hands to mightily strengthen king Uzziah, as the representative of political strategy and material force. We are “digging wells.” We are adorning cities. We are increasing our armies and navies. We are buttressing about our treasures with ramparts which appear invulnerable. All around us is going on constitution building. The clamour of the builders is incessant. Are we building another Tower of Babel, or are we building the City of God? Is it true of us, as of the builders of old, that we are using “bricks for stone, and slime for mortar?” Behold, “the Lord will come down to inspect the tower which the children of men build,” and then shall it become manifest that the solidarity and stability of the structure depend not upon clever policies, but upon holy character; and that if the government of things is to be eternally efficient, the government must rest upon the shoulders of the Lord.

### *III. Short Addresses*

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#### 20. THE STRENGTHENING OF THE HEART<sup>1</sup>

"Wait on the Lord . . . and He shall strengthen thine heart." Ps. 27:14.

What do we mean by the Heart? In the previous pages we have considered the Will as being the seat of moral force, the centre from which proceeds the power of resistance and persistence. We have regarded the Conscience as the seat of moral instinct, the discriminating faculty in the spheres of character and conduct. Now, just as the Will is the seat of basal, executive force, and just as the Conscience is the seat of moral instinct, so the Heart is the seat of feeling, the home of emotion, the empire of the sentiments. I want in this chapter to fence off a particular class of feelings, and to ask your attention almost exclusively to these. I wish to discuss what I may call the aristocracy of the feelings. I call them the aristocracy because they possess a certain subtlety of refinement which distinguishes them from others which are more closely and intimately related to the flesh. Like other aristocracies the members are both good and bad. Envy is a purely spiritual feeling, and may exist in all its intensity even when the vesture of the flesh has been finally dropped. Gratitude is a purely spiritual feeling, and may exist in undiminished power when the flesh has turned to dust. There are other feelings which are largely contingent upon the flesh, and which seek their gratification exclusively in the ways of the flesh. These will only indirectly concern us in the present discussion. Let us confine the attention to the more ethereal feelings—to feelings more subtle and more refined, more refined in evil and more refined in good. Let us concentrate our thought upon that part of the life where gratitude dwells or ingratitude hides, where flippancy revels or reverence kneels, where pity weeps or indifference reigns, where love moves like a sweet incense or hatred rises like a foul stench. These are types of the feelings which I have named the aristocracy, which sweeten

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<sup>1</sup> From *From Strength to Strength*, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1910.

or infest the upper parts of our being, and which together constitute the inner realm we call the Heart.

Now it is very evident that these feelings appear in different kinds and in varied intensity among different people. That is a very obtrusive fact in human life. If with the Divine vision we could enter into some hearts it would be like passing into a cathedral: everything is so sweet and chaste and reverent and beautiful. But if we entered into other hearts it would be like passing into a cellar: dark, damp, and forbidding, abounding in vermin and uncleanness. In some hearts the feelings lurk like carrion vultures; in others they sing and soar like the lark. So different are the feelings of different people. They are as unlike as the noon tide and the night.

Have we any responsibility as to the character of the feelings which possess the Heart? Has Conscience, the moral palate, any judgment to give concerning the things of the Heart? How far does the authority of Conscience extend? Is its dominion confined to the regions of thought and speech and deed, or does its jurisdiction reach to the inhabitants of the Heart? Does Conscience pronounce any decision respecting the feelings? Yes, Conscience indicates some feelings, and definitely condemns them. Conscience indicates other feelings, and definitely approves them. Now we have seen that the decision of Conscience involves a command. What Conscience condemns I am commanded to remove. What Conscience approves I am commanded to entertain. But in the judgments of Conscience there is a larger implication even than this. That which Conscience commands me to remove I have power at hand to remove. Let us mark that well. In the sphere of morals that which is commanded to be done can be done. Somewhere and somehow there is moral power offered to man for the discharge of all his moral obligations. Moral commandments are indications of possible moral attainments. Conscience searches my heart and commands me to turn out this feeling, and to give more room to that feeling, and to let in another that for long has been standing at the gate. And all this is a solemn indication to me that, according to the teaching of Conscience, I have power over my own Heart, power to receive a certain feeling or to reject it, and that for the exercise of this power I shall be called to account when I stand before the judgment-seat of God.

Conscience then proclaims that we are responsible for our feelings. Do we recognise the obligation? Let us seek for evidence in our common judgments. Our common judgments recognise that men have power over their own hearts. We condemn a man for ingratitude. We

heap upon him severe epithets of censure and contempt. What reason can we offer for the condemnation of men who have no determining choice in their feelings? If we can exercise no dominion over our feelings the ungrateful man should be regarded with tenderest pity as the poor victim of a hard and petrifying fate. We praise and commend a man because of his warm and bounteous love, because of the bright and sunny influence with which he transforms our dull November seasons into merry days of June. Why should we commend him if men have no power over their own hearts? If his sunny love be his in spite of himself then he is deserving of no peculiar praise for his possession. He is rather to be regarded as a very lucky man, who, by a most fortunate chance, has entered into a golden heritage which less lucky men have been denied. But no such element of chance is allowed to enter in and shape and colour our judgments. Our commendations and our condemnations of men are based upon the assumption that the personal sovereignty of man extends to the Heart, that he has large authority over his feelings, and by this recognition we only confirm the decisions of the Conscience. If it were needful to give further elaboration to this it would be easy to detach fragments from our common speech which clearly indicate that in our practical life we acknowledge that men can exercise sovereignty over the empire of the Heart. For instance, we blame one man for "allowing his feelings to run away with him," we commend another for having his feelings "well under control," and in these and in many similar phrases we clearly recognise that the sceptre of authority which has been given to man may be wielded, not only over the realms of thought and speech and deed, but also over the domain of the Heart.

I have dwelt upon this truth at considerable length because, although we give it passing recognition in common life, I do not think it receives sufficient emphasis when we are considering the culture of the spiritual life. Let me put the conclusion in the boldest and plainest terms. We have command over the Heart. We have authority over the feelings. Whatever feeling we want we can get. Whatever feeling we do not want we can reject. If we desire the feeling of love we have means to obtain it. If we desire the feeling of malice it will come at our bidding. This power in the choice of feelings is committed to every man, and for the way in which we exercise it we shall be held responsible on the great day of account.

Now, if this be true, it is surely wise and healthy for us to take thought and consider how feelings are created, how they may be regulated, how they may be fostered and restrained. How, then, are feelings

created? Upon what are they dependent? They are largely, if not exclusively, dependent upon thought. Out of thought there comes feeling, just as fragrance is born of a rose, and a noisome stench of a cesspool. Our sentiments are the exhalations of our thoughts. The Heart is the vessel in which are garnered all the odours which steal from the thoughts in the mind. Every thought tends to create a feeling. There are no thoughts devoid of influence. From every thought there proceeds an influence which goes to the making of a disposition. The fragrance of a single rose in a large room may be imperceptible, but, perceptible or not, the sweet influence is there, surely diffusing itself throughout the atmosphere. Bring a score of such roses together, and what was imperceptible in the one becomes a strong and grateful incense in them all. A single thought in the mind may exhale an almost imperceptible influence. But the influence is there, and steals like an intensely subtle odour into the Heart. Let the thoughts be multiplied, and the delicate odours unite to form an intensely powerful influence which we call a feeling, a sentiment, a disposition. But suppose the thought is not like a sweet rose, but like a poisonous nightshade. Here again the influence of a single thought may be too subtle for our detection, but let the thoughts be multiplied, and the poisonous exhalations will unite to form a sentiment of most destructive strength. Let us lay hold of this as a most practical principle in the culture of the spiritual life. We cannot have a good thought and not enrich the Heart. We cannot have an unclean thought and not poison and embitter the Heart. There is no chance or caprice about the matter. It is governed by immutable law. We cannot have one kind of thought to-day exhaling one kind of feeling, and the same kind of thought to-morrow exhaling another kind of feeling. No; each thought creates its own feeling, and always of one kind. There are certain thoughts which, if we will take them into our minds, will inevitably create the feeling of envy. Take other thoughts into the mind, and from them will be born the sentiment of jealousy. Take other thoughts into the mind and the Heart will speedily swell with pride. Fill the mind with another kind of thought and in the Heart will gather the sweet and tender sentiment of pity. Each thought creates its own sentiment, and we cannot help it. If we choose the rose we must take the fragrance with it. If we choose the nightshade we must take the stench with it. Take the thought and we must of necessity take the sentiment which the thought creates. Some sentiments gather rapidly. They appear to attain to mature fulness in a moment. Other sentiments accumulate slowly—the individual influences from the individual thoughts are

slowly but surely uniting, and some day, may be after many years, a man awakes to find his Heart possessed by a poisonous passion of whose presence and power he had never dreamed. It often happens that the sentiment of jealousy comes to her throne only after the lapse of many years. On the other hand, anger can mount the throne and govern the life in a day. The mode of its operation is quite familiar to us. Anger is the distinct and immediate creation of thought. We bring certain thoughts into the mind, and from these thoughts there proceed certain sentiments. We think, and think, and think, and the feeling accumulates and increases with our thought, until at last the Heart is full with feeling, and explodes in violent passion. Let the mind dwell upon certain thoughts and we speedily create the sentiment of anger. Let the mind reject the thoughts and the feelings of anger will never be born. And so we counsel a man not to think about the injury which he has presumably suffered, "not to nurse it," and by our counsel we imply that with the rejection of the creative thought the created passion will subside. From our thoughts, then, are born our affections and our desires—our desires, the feelings that crave: our affections, the feelings that seek to impart, whether they be of the nature of hatred or love.

Let us advance one step further. Our thought creates our feelings. Our deeds react upon and strengthen the feelings which by thought were created. My thought plans a kindly deed. Well, the thought itself will most inevitably tend to create a kindly feeling, but the doing of the deed will also assuredly tend to reinforce the feeling. Our deeds react on the feelings which prompted them, and confirm and augment them. "Blessed are the merciful." Why? "For they shall obtain mercy." Their merciful deeds shall react upon the merciful souls and increase their resources of mercy. The merciful disposition which urged the merciful deed shall be blessed by the enrichment of itself. That is one way by which our God rewards His children. He rewards our mercifulness by increasing our resources of mercy. He rewards our love by making us more loving. He rewards every act of chasteness by making us more holy. He rewards our deeds by enlarging our hearts. That is the law of our God, and the law finds application on the bad side as well as on the good. Every act of greed strengthens the feeling of avarice. Every act of impurity intensifies the feeling of lust. Our thought creates our feelings, and our deeds react upon the feelings in quickening and intensifying power. What, then, is the secret of the culture of the Heart? It is this—we must get back to the origin of feeling. We must get back to imaginations, to ideas, to ideals. As is the mind so will be

the Heart. A stony Heart finds its explanation in the mind. A pure Heart may be interpreted in the mind. "Set your mind on things above," exhorts the Apostle Paul; "Set your mind on things above," and your feelings will soar heavenward, like white-winged angels making their way home.

So far I have endeavoured to indicate the mode in which I think feelings are created and the Heart is governed. I have pointed out the way; I have not proclaimed a gospel. There has been little or nothing of "glad tidings" in the counsel, and counsel without glad tidings is not the gospel of Christ. I have said that the secret of Heart-culture is "to set the mind on things above." It is on those serene and lofty heights that a sound and healthy Heart is to be gained. But that is like saying to some decrepit weakling, who has scarcely strength to crawl along the level ways of the vale, that if he would become healthy and strong he must climb to the mountain-top and live in the home of the sweet and unpolluted air! It may be only a depressing revelation to a man to tell him that health can be found on the wind-swept summit. You bring him a gospel when you tell him how to get there, how means may be found even for him, however impoverished he may be. "Set your mind on things above." There is no gospel in that. I so easily move amid things that are below. By an unseen and mighty gravitation the things that are below drag me down to their level, the level of the vulgar and the earthborn. Is there any gospel which offers to me a heavenly gravitation to counteract the earthly gravitation, some triumphant power which will tug me towards the things that are above, as this mighty world-power drags me down to things which are below? In this word of the Master I find the gospel I seek: "I, if I be lifted up, will *draw* . . ." That is the gospel we need. The power to resist the gravitation of worldliness—to "ascend into the hill of the Lord," to "set the mind on things above," to think and live on the pure and heavenly heights—is to be found in a crucified and exalted Christ. "I will draw." Every part of our being will receive the "upward calling," and will be allured into the heavenly places. Committing ourselves to Christ we shall rise with Him, and the mind will share in the resurrection. Drawn by Him we shall rise into "newness of life." "The things that are above" will become more and more entrancingly familiar to us, and we shall find it an increasing joy to gaze upon them with rapt and unwavering vision. With the "renewing of the mind" we shall be "transformed": high-born feelings will come to be our guests, and the pervading influence of these fragrant sentiments will sweeten all the common ways in which we live and move and have our being.

## 21. THINGS CONCEALED<sup>1</sup>

TEXT: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." PROV. 25:2.

The Lord conceals that He may the more abundantly reveal. He hides a thing in order that we may have the refining discipline of seeking for it, and enjoy the keen delights of discovery. Things which are come at easily are esteemed lightly. The pebble that lies upon the common way is beneath regard. The pearl that lies buried in ocean depths is a treasure of rare price. The pain of getting intensifies the joy of possessing. If everything could be picked up from the surface, life would become exceedingly superficial. But the best things are concealed. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field." We have to dig for our wealth. We are called to a life of toil and discipline and research. Things are concealed in order that life may be a perpetual inquest. The only healthy life is the life of ardent inquisitiveness. "Ask." "Seek." "Knock."

But where shall I make my search? I never know where the wealth may be concealed. The patch of ground which appears to be the most unpromising may be the hiding place of the finest gold. Therefore I will interrogate the commonplace; I will search into the humdrum ways of life; I will pierce into the heart of tame and sober duties; I will look for treasure even in the dark cloud. I will assume that there is a dowry of grace even in the ministry of pain. I will search for the wealth of poverty, the advantage of apparent disadvantage, the jewels that may be in the heaviest grief. I will look for the hidden treasure, for "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing."

i. It is the glory of God to conceal His teaching in the hard and toilsome ways of experience.

I come to know when I have begun to do. The doctrine is hidden in the obedience. "If any man will to do, he shall know." Illumination breaks out in the ways of consecration. The Bible expresses this teach-

<sup>1</sup> From *Brooks by the Traveller's Way*, George H. Doran, 1902.

ing in a great variety of forms. Here is a beautiful image from the lips of the Psalmist. "*Light is sown for the righteous.*" I can so arrange the sowing of seed that my garden is never without flowers. They succeed one another in appropriate succession, and each month is adorned with its own distinctive loveliness. I think of next March, with its bleak and chilly east winds. I imagine its prevailing desolations. But the bulbs are sown which, when the chilly month comes, will have emerged into beautiful flower. Now hidden, they are sown for March, and at the appointed time they will appear in their radiant robes. And there are chilly March months which I anticipate in the round of my life, the season of cold disappointment, of heavy perplexity, of dark bereavement; but "*the light is sown,*" and when the chilly month comes, the light will be manifested in counsel and glory. Now it is hidden; when it is needed it will be found. But where shall I find it? "*Light is sown for the righteous.*" Only along that particular way has the seed been sown. No light has been sown in the ways of revolt, and if I journey in these paths of transgression, the March season will find me bereft of the illumination of a clear and cheery light. Only as I toil along the way of obedience, the way of righteousness, shall I have gracious surprises of light which the loving Lord has sown and concealed for my benediction.

Here is another word from the old book suggestive of the same teaching. "*To him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna.*" There is hidden manna. God has concealed heavenly food, nourishing and sustaining vision. Where has He concealed it? Just beyond the fight. "*To Him that overcometh will I give.*" The fight is followed by the feast. Every conquest leads to the discovery of hidden manna. You fight and overcome the devil, and immediately you are conscious of a sweet joy, a sense of satisfaction, a wondrous perception of the fellowship and favour of God. It is the hidden manna. "*Angels came and ministered unto Him.*" This gift of illumination, and this feast of fat things do not come to us before we have traversed the way of obedience. These are favours that are hidden in the very midst of the toilsome way, for it is "*the glory of God to conceal a thing.*"

2. It is the glory of God to conceal His fortune in apparent misfortune.

We often find that the "valley of the shadow" gives rest to eyes which had become wearied with the "green pastures," and tired with the gleaming of the "still waters." It is sometimes the shadow that "restoreth our soul." The darkness often brings the healing medicament. In the apparent misfortune the Lord has hidden a fortune. God

has concealed His riches in the night. The overcast sky is frequently our best friend.

*The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.*

What a calamity it appeared when the Apostle Paul was checked in his missionary career, and imprisoned in custody at Rome. It appeared as though an irrigating river had been dammed up, and had become a localised lake. His evangel appeared to be confined, and his activities paralysed. But it was "the glory of God to conceal a thing." The misfortune was only the shrine of a larger fortune. The Apostle cries with great jubilation—"The things that happened unto me have turned out rather for the furtherance of the Gospel." Out of his activity there came glorious letters which have guided and cheered the pilgrimage of a countless host.

Pain comes to be my guest. My powers are wasted, and I am burdened with the dark companionship. I call it a calamity, or I regard it as a sore misfortune; but how often it has turned out that the calamity was only the dark vesture of benediction. In my suffering I gained a wider sympathy. My responsiveness was enriched. "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress."

Disappointment flings a barrier across my path. My purposes are thwarted. My ambitions are checked. There comes an imperative "halt" in my life. I regard it as an ill day, and yet how often the apparently ill thing contains a jewel. Disappointment makes me think. I take a wider view of things. Through my thoughtfulness I attain to a finer discernment. Such is the gracious nutriment that is often hidden in a prickly burr. The dark misfortune was only "the shadow of the Almighty."

3. It is the glory of the Lord to conceal His power in apparently contemptible agents.

We never know where the Lord is preparing His instruments. Their emergence is usually creative of surprise. God hides His preparations in such strange places. He wants a missionary for the New Hebrides, and He fashions him in a peasant's cottage at Dumfries. Three of the most stalwart and fruitful labourers in modern Methodism were reared in a labourer's hut. God so frequently deserts conspicuous spheres, and nourishes His great ones in the obscure corners of the world. Perhaps the mightiest spiritual ministry, now being exerted in our country, is proceeding from the life of some unknown and un-

recognised woman, living a strong and beautiful life in cramped and abject material conditions. "Things that are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not." He makes the nobodies and the nothings into kings and queens.

## 22. PERILOUS SLEEP<sup>1</sup>

TEXT: "I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."  
II PET. 1:13.

TEXT: "I stir up your minds by way of remembrance." II PET. 3:1.

The peril suggested by the Apostle is that of an insidious sleep. His readers were not inclined to any deliberate revolt from the truth. They were not meditating any act of open and avowed treachery. They were in no immediate danger of consciously allying themselves with the evil one. They were not mustering their forces in hostility to the Son of God. The peril was of another kind. They were in danger of almost unconsciously dropping their enthusiasm, of losing the keenness of their discipleship, and of subsiding into a fatal sleep. The Apostle therefore seeks to "stir them up," to keep them awake, to preserve their vivid apprehension of truth and their sense of the glory of the grace of Christ. This perilous sleep, which so easily encroaches upon the Christian life, may be induced in many ways, and our meditation may gather round about those which are perhaps the most prevalent.

### I. THERE IS A SLEEP WHICH IS BEGOTTEN OF FAMILIARITY WITH THE TRUTH

That which once startled us may ultimately minister to a deeper slumber. The Christmas bells awoke me in the hours of night, but I lay awake until they lulled me into sleep again. The alarm bell which originally stirred us into the brightest vigilance may act at last as a lullaby to lead us into deeper sleep. The green of the spring time arrests us by its novelty, but by summer time the observation of most people is satiated, and the attention has gone to sleep. The permanent grandeur of the night sky has long since induced the majority of people into a profound sleep, while a display of fireworks will stir them into most deliberate attention. What is the principle underlying

<sup>1</sup> From *Brooks by the Traveller's Way*, George H. Doran, 1902.

all this? Unwilled observation is soon satiated and goes to sleep. Willed observation, vision with executive force behind it, is full of discernment, and is continually making discoveries which keeps the mind alert and interested. Get a will behind the eye, and the eye becomes a searchlight, and the familiar is made to disclose undreamed-of treasure. We must "stir up the mind" by allying it to a strong, deliberate, and directive will. If the familiar thing is to abound in fruitful revelations, if I am not to sleep in mental satiety, I must control my observations with a strong hand, so that, in all its work, it is as sharp and penetrating as a needle.

Is not all this equally true as to our familiarity with Christian truth? Here in the Word of God we have pictures of the life of Christ, revelations of His mind and disclosures of His heart. We may become so familiar with them that our attention goes to sleep. There are no further unveilings, no novelties, nothing unexpected, and the familiar vision ceases to arrest our attention. What do we need? We need to "stir up the mind," to put some force behind it, to direct it in a strong, fresh, eager inquisitiveness. We need to put it into the attitude of "asking," "seeking," "knocking," and the familiar presence will reveal itself in unaccustomed guise. The familiar puts on wonderful robes when approached by a fervent inquisitor. Truth makes winsome revelations to her devoted wooers. Every day the ardent lover makes a new discovery. If men would come to the familiar pages of God's Word with mental alertness analogous to that which they bring to the inspection of a stock-and-share list, they would have gracious surprises, which would make the heart buoyant and glad. The Book promises its wealth to the wakeful. There is no book has more to say about "unfolding," "revealing," "manifesting," "showing," "declaring," and the only condition is that the spectator of the promised apocalypse should be an ardent seeker, stirring up his mind in eager and determined quest.

## II. THERE IS A SLEEP WHICH IS BEGOTTEN OF DECIDED OPINIONS

There is a very suggestive sentence in one of John Stuart Mill's essays, which will enable me to make my meaning perfectly clear: "The fatal tendency of mankind to leave off thinking about a thing when it is no longer doubtful, is the cause of half their errors." That is to say, a decided opinion may make a man thoughtless about his opinion and may induce a mental sleep. It so frequently happens, that when a man has attained a decided opinion, he ties a bit of tape about

it, puts it away in a pigeon hole, and lapses into unconscious slumber. He leaves off thinking about it. When the matter was still doubtful, he was engaged in constant examination. While the conclusion was still uncertain, he remained a persistent explorer. But now that his judgment is decided, the explorer goes to sleep. What is the issue? We lose a thing when we cease to think about it. It is well to have decided thoughts, but it is bad and fatal to stop thinking. There is need in every life for a fresh stream of thought to be continually playing about the most cherished opinions, principles, and beliefs. When the photographer is developing his plate in a dark room, he keeps the liquid in constant motion, moving over the face of the plate, and evolving into clearer outline its hidden wealth. Our thought should be continually moving over the face of truths and beliefs, bringing out into discernment lines and beauties never before conceived. You have a very decided opinion on the Atonement? Then there is a peril that you may cease to think about it. The thing is settled and you may go to sleep. The man who has not a very decided opinion about the Atonement may be moving with doubtful thought round about the great mystery, and may, after all, be gathering fruit which may be unknown to you. Let us "stir up our minds" and turn the stream of our thought on to our accepted beliefs and our decided judgments, that the wealth of these may not remain stationary, but may reveal more and more of the hidden wisdom of grace.

### III. THERE IS A SLEEP WHICH IS BEGOTTEN OF FAILURE

Success can make a man sleep by making him cocksure. Triumph can make men careless and thoughtless. The glare of prosperity can close men's eyes in slumber. There is a "destruction that wasteth at noon-tide." A perilous sleep can also be begotten of failure. When repeated disappointment visits the life, when the "wet blanket" is frequently applied to our fervent ambitions, when the fire in the soul is damped, and enthusiasm dies out, the life is inclined to a most dangerous sleep. How many there are who were once awake and enthusiastic in civic service, or in seeking social ameliorations, or in the ministry of Christian instruction, who are now sunk in the indifference of a profound sleep. They were disappointed with the results. The grey conditions at which they worked never gained any colour. The unattractive lives to which they ministered were never transfigured. The desert never revealed even a tiny patch blossoming like the rose. And so their enthusiasm smouldered. They became lukewarm. Their re-

forming energy abated. They went to sleep. This is "the pestilence that walketh in darkness." Is not this the peril that the Apostle Paul anticipated for young and enthusiastic Timothy? He was beginning his Christian discipleship, fervent, hopeful, optimistic, with the eager consecration of his entire strength. The Apostle knew that disappointment would confront him, that cold water would be thrown upon his enthusiasm, that many a hopeful enterprise would issue in apparent failure, and the young recruit would be exposed to the indifference of a fatal sleep. "Stir up the gift that is in thee." Stir it into flame! Keep thy first love ardent and vigorous. Feed thy fires. Let disappointment only deepen thy consecration, and failure keep thee near the well-spring of eternal life.

#### IV. THERE IS A SLEEP WHICH IS BEGOTTEN OF THE ENCHANTED GROUND

When difficulties appear to have vanished from our life, when Apollyon no longer encounters us with dreadful front, when there is no lion in the way, when the giants are miles in the rear, and the precipitous hills, that took so long to climb, are away back on the far horizon, then we are in imminent peril of a most dangerous sleep. "I saw then in my dream that they went on till they came to a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy if he came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull and heavy of sleep, wherefore he said unto Christian, 'I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up mine eyes. Let us lie down here and take a nap.' 'By no means,' said Christian, 'lest sleeping, we never awake more. Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.'" And how did these two pilgrims contrive to keep themselves awake as they journeyed over the enchanted ground! "Now then," said Christian, "to prevent drowsiness, let us fall into good discourse," "With all my heart," said the other, "where shall we begin? Where God began with us?" The great dreamer has summed up their conversation in this marginal note, "*Good discourse prevents drowsiness.*" They had an experience meeting. They began with the very first stages of their conversion, and told each other the story of God's redeeming grace. They reviewed the miracles of the Lord's mercy. That is the secret of safety for any traveller over the enchanted ground. Begin your review "where God began with you." Tell over to yourself, or to others, the early story of the Lord's dealings with you. Stir up your mind with a rehearsal of the wonders and favours of God, and so

far from lapsing into sleep, you shall be kept awake in a grateful song. The grace of the Lord will occupy your heart with such intensity that spiritual lapse will be impossible.

*"Watch therefore . . . lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping."*

## 23. ALTARS AND ALTAR FIRES<sup>1</sup>

TEXT: "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God." I KINGS 18:24.

I suppose that the altars built by Elijah and the prophets of Baal would be very much alike. To all outward seeming they were equally promising, and we should have been unable to surmise to which of them the fire would be sent. Anybody can build an altar; we need a God for the creation of a fire! Now it is just that flame-element which the Christian religion claims to be able to provide. It claims to be judged by its ability to kindle and inflame, to turn the cold altar into the place of living fire. When I have built my little heap of stones, the Lord God will consummate my erection in hallowed flame. God will supply the essential, the element of inspiration, the radiant gift which will convert the little altar into His own dwelling-place and sanctuary.

i. Anyone can build an altar; it requires a God to provide the flame. *Anybody can build a house; we need the Lord for the creation of a home.* A house is an agglomeration of bricks and stones, with an assorted collection of manufactured goods; a home is the abiding-place of ardent affection, of fervent hope, of genial trust. There is many a homeless man who lives in a richly furnished house. There is many a fifteen-pound house in the crowded street which is an illuminated and beautiful home. The sumptuously furnished house may only be an exquisitely sculptured tomb; the scantily furnished house may be the very hearthstone of the eternal God. Now the Christian religion claims to be able to convert houses into homes, to supply the missing fire, and to bring an aspiring flame to the cold and chilling heap. The New Testament does not say very much about homes; it says a great deal about the things that make them. It speaks about life and love and joy and peace and rest! If we get a house and put these into it, we shall have secured a home. Here, then, are two houses. In both of them there is no love, no joy, no peace, no rest. There is no flame of geniality

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<sup>1</sup> From *Thirsting for the Springs*, George H. Doran, 1903.

and radiant hope. Let us bring the Christian religion into one of the houses, and do as you please with the other. In one house the tenants shall all kneel before King Jesus. They shall be one in common purpose, and they shall strive together with common mind and will. What will assuredly happen? With absolute certainty the house will become a home! That is a glorious common-place in the history of the Christian faith. Where Christ has been enthroned, and every member of the family becomes a worshipper, there steals into the common life a warmth of affection which converts even trivial relationships into radiant kinships. What shall we do with the other house? Sin reigns! Passion reigns! Estrangement reigns! There is continued tumult and unrest. What shall we do? Call upon Baal! Call upon "the god of this world!" It would be a fruitless quest. There is nothing for it but the grace of Christ. God changes houses into homes; let Him be God.

2. *Anyone can proclaim a moral ideal; we need the Lord for the creation of moral enthusiasm.* I suppose in fundamental ethics there is not a single person in my congregation who has any need of instruction. Probably we could all become teachers. What need is there for teaching about such matters as lust, falsehood, and avarice? Everybody knows all about them. But the possession of a moral ideal does not necessarily transfigure the life. A man might draw up, for the guidance of his fellowmen, an exalted code, and yet he may be the most notorious scamp in the city. The man who compiles the moral headlines in the copy books which our little ones have to transcribe may yet be the deepest-dyed villain who walks the ways of men. You may have a neatly printed list of moral maxims standing beside your calendar upon the desk of your counting-house, and yet they may no more influence your commercial life than does the wall paper which covers the walls. The erection of moral ideals is the building of an altar. Now we want the flame, the fire of a passionate moral enthusiasm. Where shall we get the fire? We exalt our moral ideals in the minds of our children, but how shall we get them to love the right, and to fervently aspire after it? The Christian religion claims to answer the question. Here are two lives. In both of them there is knowledge of the moral ideal. In both of them the character is immoral. Let us bring the Christian religion to the one, and you shall do as you please with the other. "He will baptize with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." The issue of fellowship with the Christ is to be the inspiration, whose influence shall be felt like fire. Love becomes a factor in the life, and cold duty becomes a fervent delight. How will you deal with the other man? How will you bring to him the fire? I confess I know no

answer. Apart from the Christ, there seems to be no way of bringing fire on to cold altars. The Lord brings the spirit of burning, which makes aspiration fervent, and consumes away the indwelling filth. "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God."

*3. Any nation can make legal enactments against crime. We need the law to make men hate it.* The only defence against crime is not a punitive law, but a passionate, spiritual recoil. If we would deliver men from sin, we must make them loathe it. Some way or other we must kindle a holy hatred in man, the fire of blazing indignation. There are many men who are kept from crime, who nevertheless do not dislike it. Abolish the police, and at the moment of abolition, these men would stretch out their hands and grasp the forbidden fruit. But virtue created by fear of the prison will be quite out of place in heaven. The only worthy virtue is the virtue which is the fruit of love. The only security from sin is found in the ardours of a passionate resentment. We must make men hate it. How shall we light the fire? Let us turn to the Christ. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other." Let us pause here. "Hate the one." That appears to be suggestive of what we need. We are in search of a hatred. We are told we cannot serve God and mammon. If we love the one we must hate the other, and so for the hatred of sin we must turn to the love of our Lord. We are brought back to the old fellowship. Kinship with the Christ begins in humble surrender, deepens into intimacy, and fructifies in loving dispositions. Out of the love there is born the hatred. Let a man love the virtuous, and he will loathe the vicious.

*4. Any municipality can coerce men into charity. We need the Lord for the creation of philanthropy.* The Poor Law system may compel us into giving, but in the gift there may be nothing of the fervour of a passionate good-will. How can we get cold charity converted into radiant philanthropy? Who will bring the fire to the frozen altar? There is an old man in the Christian Scriptures who speaks in this wise: "He loved me and gave Himself for me"; "we love, because He first loved us"; "the love of Christ constraineth me." Out of that love for the Master there spring all the beautiful ministries which seek the welfare of our fellow-men. Love for the Lord just blossoms into philanthropy. There is no other way for the making of philanthropists. It is kindled by our attachment to the Christ of God. "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God."

## 24. WHAT I WOULD IF I COULD<sup>1</sup>

TEXT: "Some would have taken Him, but . . ." JOHN 7:44.

If the opportunity had been favourable, they would have taken Him. They were in the mood for it. Their inclinations were formed. Their purpose was set. In spirit everything was ready, but the opportunity did not serve. What was the difference between these men and those who eventually perfected their desire and carried it out? Is there any difference in temperament, in purpose, in moral colour and constitution? Is there any difference in soul? No, the difference is only in the opportunity. There is no difference between the Guy Fawkes who lays his powder barrels and fires them, and the Guy Fawkes who lays his powder barrels but is prevented from firing. Guy Fawkes does not become virtuous because his programme was not accomplished. He remains the same. He would have been no worse if his designs had been attained. Spiritually he did the deed. It was only an unexpected antagonism which prevented the visible achievement.

"Some would have taken Him, but . . ." If they had had the opportunity, they would have done it. See, then, opportunity, does not create character, but only reveals it. Opportunity makes patent what has hitherto been latent. The taking of the Master would not have rendered these men vicious or malicious; it would only have declared their device.

Out of this there arises a very clear and all-important principle. What we would be, if opportunity presented, that we are. Our "would-bes" are the truest index of our character. A murderous hand may be stricken aside; that makes the man no less a murderer. Everything relating to murder was present, except the opportunity. What would the stuff within me make, if opportunity presented to me the circumstances of a Cain? Are my dispositions such that I should repeat his act? What I would be in certain conditions that I am. The absence of

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<sup>1</sup> From *Thirsting for the Springs*, George H. Doran, 1903.

fulfilment affords no proof of the presence of virtue or vice. That the chained dog cannot get at me does not prove him virtuous. He would, if he could. The biting would not create his vice; he is vicious; the venom is in him. My safety is only consequent upon his inability. I am not obligated to his temper; I am in debt to his chain. The inclination is there; the fulfilment is prevented. The character of the dog is to be found in the nature of his inclination. What we would do, that, in the sight of God, we have done. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Let us take the light of this principle and carry it round about common life. Let us give another application to our text. "Some of them would have sold the margarine for butter, but . . ." Then in the sight of God they have done it. Sin that is uncommitted for fear of discovery is in reality done. A man who would label his margarine "butter," but who refrains for fear of the inspector, is essentially bad at the heart. Badness of this kind will find an outlet somewhere. Sewer gas continually seeks for an exit. Supposing one man has labelled his margarine "butter," and another man has desisted for fear of discovery, and supposing they were both brought into the presence of Him whose eyes are as flame, wherein would be the difference? Both would stand condemned.

"Some would have absented themselves from worship, but . . ." But what? "But for the look of the thing." Then a man who would have absented himself was never present. People who attend God's house for the look of the thing, never come at all. They would be absent if they dared. Then what they would do, they do. "These people draw nigh to Me, but their hearts are far from Me."

"Some would have withdrawn their subscriptions, but . . ." But what? "But for the published lists." Then they have withdrawn them. On this plane, the man who would do, has done. He whose liberality is determined by his publicity, has never given unto the Lord. "By Him actions are weighed." He does not count the amount of the offertory. He notes the disposition of the giver. "Bring no more vain oblations." The vain oblation is the gift without the giver, and with God such giving is not received. Here then is the principle I am seeking to expound. We are no better than our inclinations. Our wishes denote far more than our deeds. A man's desires register his attainments.

Now let us turn the whole matter round. If we are measured by our "would-bes," the principle would have application not only to vice, but to virtue. We are not judged by our fulfilments, but by our aspirations.

"Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." The desire to build the temple was interpreted by the Lord as a temple already built. What we would if we had the opportunity, we shall be credited with having done.

"Some would have gone to serve in the foreign field, but . . ." But what? "The door was never opened." Then, in the sight of God, such men and women have gone. To God they are foreign missionaries, and the glory of the mission-field is theirs. They would have gone, but there was an old mother to care for at home, or an invalid sister to watch, or an imbecile brother to tend. They toiled on here in the homeland, but their heart was ever away in lands of bondage and night. God will take the will for the deed. These men and women will wear the missionary's crown. Their "would-be" will be regarded as a "well-done."

"Some would have given much to the cause of the King, but . . ." But what? "Their means were straitened, and they had great difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door." They gave their little mite to the Lord's work with a great desire that it might have been more. They gave a mite plus a "would-do." Such giving is never to be estimated by the monetary quantity of the gift. "This poor woman hath given more than all." "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted with God."

"Some would have given themselves to active Christian service, but . . ." But what? "They are bed-ridden." They are chronic invalids. They lie in the bondage of continual pain. How will they be regarded in the day of the great reckoning? They will be judged by their "would-bes." Their life will be estimated not by its attainments, but by its inclinations. But is there not some little peril in thus distinguishing between inclinations and attainments, as though inclination in itself were not a great attainment? Oh, the mystic energy of many a "would-be"! The "would-be" is a prayer, and the fragrance of heaven is made of the perfume of prayer. "Golden vessels full of odours which are the prayers of saints." We cannot measure the influences of the "would-bes" that lie like fervent flames in the hearts of many of the saints of God. They are creating an atmosphere, and in this atmosphere much of the best work of the kingdom is accomplished. Our "would-bes" will constitute our crowns.

## 25. IN TIME OF FLOOD<sup>1</sup>

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." ISA. 49:19.

These heartening words were spoken to exiles who were preparing to return to the homeland. They had become so accustomed to their captivity that emancipation seemed a dream. Even when they lifted their eyes to the possibilities of return they seemed to gaze upon range after range of accumulating difficulties which would obstruct their journey home. As often as the prophet proclaimed their deliverance they proclaimed their fears. Their fears were laid one by one, but as soon as one was laid another arose!

There was, for example, the wilderness to be crossed with all its fierce and sombre desolation! "The wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." And there was the weary, pathless desert, offering only the prospect of homelessness to the bewildered pilgrim! "And an highway shall be there, and a way," clean and clear across it. There are waters to be crossed and floods to be overcome! "When thou passest through the waters they shall not overflow thee." And other difficulties will arise, all the more burdensome because unforeseen! "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low." And the enemies on the right hand and the left hand, what about them? The hostile peoples will accept their chance, and will come down upon the returning company in destructive array! "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." To every fear the prophet presents a promise; to every suspicion he offers an assurance. Now, we, too, are exiles returning to the homeland. We, too, have been in the dark realms of captivity, and by His redeeming grace our eyes have been lifted toward the better country. And we, too, are full of uncertainties and fears. There is a desert to traverse, a wilderness to cross, waters to pass

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Silver Lining*, Grosset and Dunlap, 1907.

through, mountains to climb, and we know not how we may safely reach our journey's end. And particularly are we beset by the enemy, who suddenly and unexpectedly sweeps down upon our path. But if we have the fears, ours, too, are the promises. Between the enemy and ourselves there shall be erected the standard of the Lord. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

"When the enemy shall come in like a *flood*." I think that the figure is surely taken from the river-beds of their native land. They had looked upon the dry, bleached ravines in time of drought, when scarcely a rivulet lisped down its rocky course. And then the rain had fallen on the hills, or the snow had melted upon the distant mountains, and the waters had torn down like a flood. I have picnicked away up in the solitudes of the higher Tees, when there was only a handful of water passing along, a little stream which even a child could cross. And once I saw what the natives call the "roll" coming away in the distance. Great rains had fallen upon the heights, and this was their issue; in a moment the quiet stream became a roaring torrent, and shouted along in thunderous flood. That, I think, is the figure of my text. When the sudden "roll" shall come in the life, and the little rivulet is changed into tempestuous waters, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

Now, what are some of these flood times in life when the enemy comes against us in overwhelming power? There is the flood of *passion*. There are many among my readers who do not know that flood. We are very differently constituted, and some there are in whom these particular waters bring no peril. There are some whose passion fills up slowly like a cistern; there are others who overflow in a moment. There are some who are constitutionally calm; there are others who "boil" at the slightest provocation. Well, now, floods always destroy something valuable and beautiful. I have watched a great river in flood, and I have seen how many precious things are carried down in the violent stream; a sheep that has been harmlessly playing by the bank, some tender sapling, some useful bridge. And so it is with the flood of passion that sweeps through the soul. It always damages the life through which it flows. Some seed of the kingdom, just beginning to germinate, is washed out of the ground. Some tender growth is impaired or destroyed, some little plant of meekness, or gentleness, or faith, or hope, or love. Even onlookers can frequently see the ruin; and

to the Lord the fruitful place must become a desert. "The enemy has come in like a flood."

And sometimes the flood is in the form of a great *sorrow*, and we are engulfed by it. Billow after billow goes over us, and does tremendous damage. I know that there is a sorrow appointed of the Almighty, but it is never ordained to hurt or destroy. And yet how often this particular flood, rushing into a life, works havoc with spiritual things. Have we not known many such in our own experience? "Was not So-and-so at one time a great worker in the Church?" And the answer was, "Yes, but he has never done anything since his child died!" The flood had done its evil work. And so it frequently is in lives that have been drowned in the enveloping waters. In one of our churches a little while ago a flood occurred, and the two things that were injured were the heating apparatus and the organ. I could not but think of the destructiveness wrought in the soul by the gathering waters of sorrow. Very frequently they put out the fires of geniality, and they silence the music and the song.

And so it is, one may say, with all the perilous waters that arise in human life. Sometimes the flood gathers from a multitudinous contribution of petty cares. It is amazing how mighty a volume can be made with small contributions. We could deal with one; the multitude overwhelms us! We could deal with one worry, but multitudes of them create the flood we call anxiety, and we are overthrown. And again great damage is done, working havoc to our peace and self-control and magnanimity.

Now, whenever a flood in the life damages a life the work is the work of the devil. When I am tempted into overflowing passion, or into excessive sorrow, or into overwhelming care, it is the work of the enemy. I think that if we could realise this we should be greatly helped in these perilous and frequently recurring seasons. If we could only practise our eyes so as to see in the tempting circumstance the face of the evil one we should be less inclined to the snare. If we could only get into our minds and hearts the settled conviction that behind all these threatening approaches there is the ugly enemy of our souls, we should more eagerly turn our eyes and feet toward the Lord of life and beauty. Now that Lord of life offers Himself as our defence in the time of the rising flood. He will "lift up a standard against him." I think that is very beautiful! King Canute had his regal chair carried down to the flowing tide, and he commanded the waters to retreat. The waters paid no heed, and the mighty flood advanced. But our King raises His standard against the threatening flood, and the retreat

is absolutely ensured. In the moment when we are tempted to the overwhelming passion He will come between us and the flood. "The waters shall not overflow thee." Have you noticed that wonderfully suggestive passage in the Book of Revelation where a promise is made of help in the time of flood? "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away at the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." I believe that that great promise has been abundantly confirmed in countless lives. Even the earth itself is our ally in contending with the foe. The beauties of nature will help us to contend with the forces of evil desire. I believe that if we more frequently communed with the flowers of the field we should find that the earth was a minister of the Holy Spirit. The earth would swallow up the flood. But we have more than Nature as our defence; we have the Lord of nature, the Lord in nature, not so much the supernatural as the Spirit who pervades nature and all things. That gracious Spirit will subtly steal into the threatened parts of our life, and will contend with our foe.

And so, too, it is in the flood times of sorrow. The Spirit of the Lord will engage for us, "lest we be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Have I not seen it done a hundred times? Have I not seen sorrow come into a life, and it has been entirely a minister of good and never of ill? The devil has not got hold of it, and used it as a destructive flood. Not one thing has been damaged or destroyed. It has been a minister of irrigation rather than destruction, and in the moist place of tears beautiful ferns have grown, the exquisite graces of compassion and long-suffering and peace.

"The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard!" Well, then, let Him do it. Do not let us attempt to do it for ourselves. Let us hand it over to Him. "Undertake Thou for me, O Lord." The life of faith just consists in a quiet, conscious, realising trust in the all-willing and all-powerful Spirit of God.

## *IV. Prayers*

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### 26. LONGER PRAYERS<sup>1</sup>

Eternal God, may no distraction draw us away from our communion with Thee. May we come to Thee like children going home, jubilant and glad. We have been in the far country and our garments are stained. May we hasten to the ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation. If we have been on fields of heavy battle, where the fire of the enemy has been awful and unceasing, may we hasten to Thee for the overhauling of our armor, and for the renewal of our strength. If we have been called upon to walk weary roads of unfamiliar sorrow, may we turn to Thee as to refreshing springs. If we have lapsed from our high calling, may we renew our covenant. If we have missed a gracious opportunity, may we seek another chance. If we have been counted faithful in any service, and have fulfilled our commission by the help of Thy grace, may we hasten to give the glory to Thee. Unite us, we humbly pray Thee, in the holy bonds of Christian sympathy. Deepen our pity so that we may share the sorrows of people far away. May we feel the burden of the burdened and weep with them that weep. May we not add to our sin by ceasing to remember those who are in need. Grant peace in our time, O Lord, the peace which is the fruit of righteousness. Let Thy will be done among all the peoples, so that in common obedience to Thee all the nations may find abiding union. Amen.

Holy Father, we humbly pray Thee to reveal unto us the unsearchable riches of Christ. Refine our discernments in order that we may behold them; and deepen our hearts in order that we may long to possess them. Unveil to us our poverty so that we may seek Thy wealth. Lead us through meekness and penitence to the reception of spiritual power. May our loins be girt about with truth. May we drink deeply at the waters of promise and find refreshment in im-

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Whole Armour of God*, Fleming H. Revell, 1916.

mediate duty. We pray that Thou wilt bind us together in the bonds of holy sympathy. Help us to gather up the needs of others in common intercession. Make us ready to bear the burden of the race. Quicken our imaginations in order that we may enter into the sorrows of Thy children in every land. We humbly pray Thee to steady our faith in these days of bewilderment. In all the confusion of our time may we never lose sight of Thy throne. In all the obscuring of our ideals may we never lose sight of Christ. And O, Lord, out of our disorder may we be led into larger ways. Let Thy Holy Spirit brood over us, quickening all that is full of sacred promise, and destroying all that hinders our friendship with Thee. Amen.

Almighty God, Our Father, it is by Thy grace that we attain unto holiness, and it is by Thy light that we find wisdom. We humbly pray that Thy grace and light may be given unto us so that we may come into the liberty of purity and truth. Wilt Thou graciously exalt our spirits and enable us to live in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Impart unto us a deep dissatisfaction with everything that is low, and mean, and unclean, and create within us such pure desire that we may appreciate the things which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. Wilt thou receive us as guests of Thy table. Give us the glorious sense of Thy presence, and the precious privilege of intimate communion. Feed us with the bread of life; nourish all our spiritual powers; help us to find our delight in such things as please Thee. Give us strength to fight the good fight of faith. Give us holy courage, that we may not be daunted by any fear, or turn aside from our appointed task. Make us calm when we have to tread an unfamiliar road, and may Thy presence give us companionship divine. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee we are called to be children of the light. Even though we have been children of the darkness, and have loved the ways of error rather than of truth, and of sin rather than of holiness, Thou art calling us to the light of eternal day. We would answer Thy call in penitence, and we would return to Thee like wayward children who are coming home again. We do not ask to lose the sense of our shame, but we ask to taste the sweetness of Thy forgiveness. We do not ask to forget our rebelliousness, but we ask to be assured that we are reconciled to Thee. We would sit at Thy table and receive the bread of life. We would worship at Thy feet

and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We would stand before Thee with our feet shod with the shoes of readiness, willing to go out on errands of Christian love and service. If we are inclined to frivolity may we become inclined to be serious and reverent. If we are heedless may we become fired with heavenly ambition and spiritual devotion. Redeem us from the littleness of selfishness and lift us into the blessed communion of our fellowmen. Give us a wide and generous outlook upon human affairs. Endow us with the sympathy that rejoices with them who are rejoicing and that weeps with them that weep. If Thou art leading us through the gloom of adversity may we find that even the clouds drop fatness. If Thou art leading us through the green pastures and by the still waters, may we recognise the presence of the great Shepherd and may our joys be sanctified. Hallow all our experiences, we humbly pray Thee, and may we all become branches in the vine of our Lord. Amen.

## 27. DAILY PRAYERS<sup>1</sup>

Heavenly Father, help me to begin the year in the spirit of holy confidence and love. May I approach my daily work as though it were given to me from the hands of the King! May I see His name upon it, and may I go about my daily toil as about my Father's business!

Eternal God, I would begin the day in sincere and entire consecration. Help me to offer all my powers and all my possessions to Thee. Let there be no secrecy between my heart and my Saviour. Wilt thou possess me fully?

Almighty God, I pray that I may always behold the light upon the hills. Even when I am walking in the valley may there be a reflected light from the heights! Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; help me to find strength in the gracious convictions and not be afraid.

Eternal God, it is Thy will to save the world. May it be my will to serve Thee in the ministry of salvation! May all my powers be dedicated to the gracious purpose! May I count it the prize and glory of my life to be found in the ranks of my Redeemer!

Most glorious God, help me to behold Thy glory until it transforms and transfigures me. Let me gaze upon Thy beauty until I possess Thy likeness. Let Thy gentleness make me great. Let Thy love make me pitiful. Let Thy strength make me invincible.

My Father God, Thou hast given me a day which is yet without stain. Wilt Thou save it from defilement? Let its record be one of nobility, and tenderness, and grace. Let the history I shall write to-day be worthy of the book of Life.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Daily Altar*, Fleming H. Revell, 1907.

Almighty God, I bless Thee that Thy banner over us is love. Help us to keep our eyes upon it. May we fight under no other banner, and may all our contentions and strivings be in the spirit of Christian love! Let that love be kindled in my heart to-day, and let it blaze and burn for Thee.

My Father in heaven, help me to retain the spirit of a little child. Save me from pride and a foolish independence. Let me never be ashamed to lean upon Thee, and to inquire daily at the gate of Thy temple.

Heavenly Father, I pray that the way of my life may be the highway of the Lord. Let me take Thy path even when it does not appear to offer joy and peace. Let me tread it even when it seems to lead to a cross. Thy will be done!

Most gracious God, wilt Thou grant unto me the grace of perseverance? Let not the failure of yesterday destroy my courage for to-day. Let yesterday's defeat only drive me nearer to the source of victory. And so let my failures become ministers to my successes. And by Thy grace let them bring me nearer to Thee.

Most merciful God, let Thy grace soften my spirit into gentle compassions. Redeem me from the hardness of worldliness and the insensitiveness of pride. Give me the pity that is born of grace. Let me have the mind of Christ.

Almighty Father, I thank thee that even the prodigal son can find his place in the Father's house. I pray for all Thy prodigal children that they may turn their weary feet towards home. May some holy impulse be created within them, that Thou shalt constrain their steps to the better life! Thy kingdom come!

Heavenly Father, I pray that Thy grace may be given to my spirit to-day. Let me be a child of light. Let my life be so aflame with holy zeal that others may be kindled in my fellowship. Minister unto me that I may be the minister of Thy love and light.

Heavenly Father, I pray that Thou wilt renew and exalt my purposes. Save me from the imprisoning influences of mean desires. Let

my ambitions be large and liberal, and let them include the welfare of my brethren. Let me have the mind of Christ.

Eternal God, in whose favour we find our life, I beseech Thee to enrich and enlarge my soul. Deliver me from all premature satisfaction, and fill my heart with holy aspirations. Let my hunger never be satisfied until I awake in Thy likeness.

Heavenly Father, I pray that Thou wilt implant in my heart the secret of Thy peace. Deliver me from all distractions which will spoil the spirit of my devotion. Let me be calm and receptive in Thy presence, and let me take the water of life freely.

Heavenly Father, I pray that Thou wouldst keep my soul in spiritual health. Let me not become affected by the ill-contagion of the world. Deliver me from moral sicknesses, and especially from secret evil growths. Give unto me the health of Thy countenance.

Almighty God, may Thy blessing give me strength and peace! May I turn to my work as one who will render account unto his Lord! May I not labour as unto a taskmaster, but as unto my everlasting Friend!

Eternal God, help me this day to snatch from every moment some trophy of Thy grace. Let every hour wear its own gracious jewel. Let me never be despoiled, but may I always be winning spoils from the kingdom of the evil one!

Almighty God, I pray that the day may remind me anew of the power of the resurrection. May its saving energy lift me into heights of life which I have never yet scaled! May I make great progress to-day in climbing the heavenly hill! Let all the pilgrims on the heavenly road have a closer walk with God.

Almighty God, I pray Thee to help me to fill up the vacant places in my life. Thou dost make the odd corners in nature beautiful. Teach me Thy way, O Lord! Let me plant flowers in the empty places. Make the very corners of my life centres of spiritual loveliness. Make me a wise gardener, and let my life abound in flowers and fruits.

## *V. Bible Studies*

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### 28. THE THINGS WHICH LEAD TO PEACE<sup>1</sup>

"The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you." PHIL. 4:9.

In our last meditation the Apostle has been unveiling to us the spacious sphere of Christian contemplation. Now he passes from thinking to doing. The transition is perhaps unnecessary, because the character of our doings is inevitably determined by the character of our thoughts. A revolution in a man's mind will always result in a revolution of the life. If we alter the patterns in the loom, the entire patterns of the finished product will be changed. It is absolutely impossible to have a beautiful mind and a repulsive life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Whatever may be the errors and the idle fancies of Christian Science, in this particular matter they stand upon the truth of the everlasting God. Get the thought put right and everything will be in tune. And so I say it was perhaps unnecessary for the Apostle to add to his counsel about thinking a further counsel about doing.

But perhaps Paul's further counsel is only intended to be a particular emphasis of the advice just given. He turns their thoughts to meditations upon his own life and teaching. "The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do." Happy the teacher who is not afraid of the hearer turning from the message to the messenger. I looked at a florist's shop the other day, and I saw a great many packets of seeds. In the middle of the window there was an exquisitely beautiful plant in flower, and attached to it were these words, "Grown from our seed." I say thrice blessed is the minister of God who, when he has been commanding the seed of the word, can point to his own evident experiences as confirmation of its power and grace. And thrice miserable are those servants of God

<sup>1</sup> From *The High Calling*, Fleming H. Revell, 1909.

whose speech is utterly belied by their life. Now the Apostle Paul is bold enough to ask his readers to examine the word and works of grace in his own life. There is no unworthy conceit in the challenge. He makes no profession to be perfect as our earlier meditations disclose. But he does claim that the Lord has worked miracles in his own life, and that the signs of the miracles are open to the common eye. Why should he not make his boast in the Lord? "I know whom I have believed." "I am persuaded that He is able to keep." "My life bears witness to my words; Examine it."

First of all, the Apostle is assured of the truth of his own message. He is in no manner of doubt concerning "the things ye have learned and received." And we know where these things made their centre. The Apostle's teaching gathered itself round about the cross. The Apostle further taught that no one could live by the cross without being inspired by the secret of sacrifice, and impelled to self-crucifixion. No one who dwelt in the shadow of Calvary would be unwilling to shed his own blood. Calvary must be in some degree repeated in the life of every disciple. We must take up our cross and follow Him. I recently walked over a trackless Alp, guided only by red marks upon the rocks. I reached my destination by esteeming those bloody sides as the marks of the right road. And so it is in the life of fellowship with the Lord. When we are self-crucified we are on the road that will bring us at last unto the perfect glory. "These things do."

In the second place, the Apostle was perfectly sure of the trend of his own life. "The things which ye . . . heard and saw in me." Again I say, there is no conceit in a man's affirming that he seeks the things that are above. There is no rude pride in a man's declaration that he is "marching to Zion." He may slip and even fall, but he will fall with his face to the light. Paul did not speak in lame hesitations and in trembling doubts. He did not whisper; "I hope I am following the Saviour." He spoke in tones of perfect assurance, and his confidence acted like a splendid contagion. It would never do for an Alpine guide to pause and hesitate and speak in stammers concerning his knowledge of the road. He must step out quietly and confidently, in order that the others may follow with assurance in his steps. Paul was just an Alpine guide into the hill country of the Eternal God. And he was not afraid to turn to his children, begotten of the faith, and call them to mark his footprints and follow on. "The things which . . . ye saw in me, these things do."

And here is the reward of such meditation and obedience. "*The God of peace shall be with you.*" And that is everything. If the King

is present at the table, a crust is a feast. If the Lord is on the battlefield, then amid all the surrounding turbulence there is a centre of peace. When the God of peace is in the life there is a chamber in which the sound of warfare never comes. A motorist said to me the other day: "The most tempestuous storm never gets into my engine." And so it is when the Lord is with us. The real dynamics of the life are unimpaired. And what matters it if the world bruises my skin or denies me transient comforts, if my heart is sound, and if all that is within me is kept in the smooth activity of "perfect peace"? The red road is a way of constant struggle, but it is also the path of unbroken peace.

## 29. LIVING IN THE STREETS<sup>1</sup>

"Beware of the dog." PHIL. 3:2, 3.

There is no more familiar sight in Eastern cities than the herds of dogs which prowl about "without a home and without an owner, feeding on the refuse and filth of the streets, quarrelling among themselves, and attacking the passer-by." And it is in this vagrant, outside life that the Apostle finds his figure of speech. It was a favourite figure by which the Jew expressed his conception of the conditions of the Gentile world. All who were beyond the circle of his own race were outside the home, living in the streets, feeding on garbage and uncleanness, or on the crumbs and offal of life's feast. But the Apostle lays hold of the figure, reverses the application, and uses it to express the condition of the Jews.

And this is the form of his indictment: It is you who are living in the outside streets. It is you who are contented with the externals, and satisfied with the mere crumbs of religious nutriment. You give the emphasis to life in the flesh, and you ignore the inner sanctuary of the Spirit. You think much of the "mutilation" of the body, and you give little concern to the consecration of the soul. You abide in ordinances, you boast of fleshy pedigrees, you glory in "outward things." And what is this but the life of dogs—life spent in the streets? And it is all the more pathetic because you are called to something infinitely better, even the settled life of the home, the bounty of a well-filled table, and all the gracious intimacies of a spiritual feast.

And so the great Apostle bids his readers beware of this most seductive peril in religion, the peril of dwelling in the streets. Streets are not homes—they are only the helpful means by which we reach our homes. But we are continually tempted to remain in the streets instead of walking through them to our homes. Ritualism is a street, and to many people an exceedingly pleasant and inviting one, and

<sup>1</sup> From *The High Calling*, Fleming H. Revell, 1909.

when used as a means and not an end it is often a most gracious convenience for reaching "the secret place" of our Lord. But it is possible so to emphasise the ritual as to forget "the secret place" to which it is meant to lead, and to find so much delight in the mode of approach that we never arrive. We may think more of a posture than we do of a disposition, more of a form of prayer than of the spirit of prayer, more of a sacrament than of the Lord. And this is to be "dogs" picking up things in the streets, instead of "children" sitting with our Father at "the feasts of fat things" which He has provided for them that love Him.

And so it behooves us to "beware." There are always *evil-workers* about, men and women who will drag down the high spiritualities of religion and ensnare us in the small temporalities of external ordinance and worship. They will emphasise circumcision and fasting, and the wearing of phylacteries, and the washing of hands; but they have no mind for the humility which weeps and prays in secret, which rears a sanctified altar where the sound of human applause is never heard, and which shuts out all earthly clamour in order that it may listen to the voice of the Eternal God. And it is so easy to listen to these superficial callings, to forsake the "Holy of holies," and to loiter in the outer halls and passages of religion, and even to find our satisfaction in the streets. And the Apostle therefore unfolds the true life of the child, the rich, intimate life of God's family circle, as opposed to this precarious life of the dogs in the streets. To "worship God in the Spirit," our feet are not to halt until we have reached the inner and most holy realm of the Spirit. Every street must lead up to this. Every bit of ritual must be a finger-post pointing to this. Every form and ceremony, every posture, every means of grace, every sacrament must bring us into "the secret place of the Almighty." Even the Bible must not be our goal; it must be a street through which we pass to our Lord. "Ye search the Scriptures . . . and ye will not come to Me." We must press through all these external ministries until, having left them all behind, we are temporarily independent of them, and we breathe and hold communion in the glorious fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

"*And glory in Christ Jesus.*" Here is a second characteristic of the inner life, the spiritual home-life, as contrasted with the life of the streets. Men who abide in the outsides of things have their eyes fastened upon the shrine, and not upon the treasure it contains. They think more of the material temple than of "the invisible Church," more of an ecclesiastical privilege than of a spiritual grace, more of a fleshly pedigree than of a mystic kinship with the Lord. They put their "con-

fidence in the flesh," and they glory in the things of the flesh. But the child of the home of God experiences a certain detachment from these externals; the material obtrusiveness drops away as soon as he comes into the presence of the Lord. The flame of the little lamp is no longer wanted when it has led us into the radiant home of God. It can then be put out. We will give thanks for its kindly ministry but in the brightness of His presence we will glory in the Lord. Let us never allow the flesh to usurp the throne of the spirit. Let us never burn incense to our nets. "He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."

## 30. BELIEVING IS SEEING<sup>1</sup>

"He staggered not . . . through unbelief." ROM. 4:20.

The divine promise had been given. There could be no doubt about that. But there were no external helps to make the soul certain of its fulfilment. The promise had no friends in the outer circumstances. The face of everything frowned upon it. Common experience was against it. Common sense was against it. And yet Abraham "staggered not"! He steadied himself on the promise. His soul nested in the divine purpose. He dwelt in the secret place of the Most High. By faith he companioned with friendly realities when every hard and glaring event appeared to be his foe. For faith is a finer sense even than common sense. Common sense, when it is despoiled of faith, is a very local and deceitful sight. But seeing is believing! Nothing of the kind. Believing is the only true seeing! "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, *thou shouldest see . . . ?*" "*He endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*"

And we, too, have to trudge over roads where circumstances just shriek against our creeds. We have heard the divine word, but the "not likely" stares upon us on every side. And common sense is very aggressive, and it rears itself against the promise of our God. And the gathered wisdom of the world obtrudes itself against the hidden wisdom of the Lord. Our material setting is unfriendly. Carnal forces are ironical in their easy triumph. And we begin to look foolish in our simple faith. And, God help us! sometimes we begin to feel foolish, and we are tempted to make obeisance to the kingdom of the apparent, and to bow down and worship it.

Never was there greater need of deep-living men and women who will confront the proud and massed "unlikelies" with the spoken promise of our God. Never was the need more urgent that we should confirm ourselves in the promise amid the uncomfortable irony of

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<sup>1</sup> From *Life in the Heights*. Copyright, 1925, by Harper & Brothers.

circumstances, and the loud and blatant taunt of our foes. We must wear the word of the Lord like an athlete's belt! "Having your loins girt about with truth!" These are the men and women who remain victors on the field at the end of the long and bloody day. At the beginning of day theirs is the faith which gives substance to things hoped for; at the end of the day the things hoped for have become their eternal possession.

## 31. THE INCLUSIVE SACRIFICE<sup>1</sup>

"They first gave their own selves unto the Lord." II Cor. 8:5.

They gave their own selves to the Lord, and then they gave their money. The one followed the other in natural and vital succession. If the first gift is sincere, the second gift is certain. If the first gift is partial and hesitant, the second gift will be maimed and reluctant. The vital gift of self is gloriously inclusive of every other offering. It is the whole circle which encloses the varied segments. It is the integer which covers the fractions. It is the great surrender which draws everything else into its train.

When self has been yielded to the Lord all other interests and possessions in our life will bear the marks of the Lord Jesus. Everything and every circumstance will be regarded and welcomed as part of the surrendered host. The healthy spiritual life is not so much a procession of sacrifices as a spirit of inclusive consecration. The queen bee has winged her flight in a certain direction and the entire swarm is in her train. I think this must be the meaning of a sentence in a letter which was found in the pocket of a French sergeant who was found dead on the battlefield of the Marne. The letter is written to his parents, and this is the sentence: "You know how I had made the sacrifice of my life before leaving." That was the all-inclusive surrender, and it embraced anything and everything that might follow. Come what will, my God, and come how it will my life is Thine! Here is my life, for all it is and for all it has! Here is my life, for all it meets and all it does! "I had made the sacrifice of my life before leaving!" "They first gave their own selves unto the Lord."

Now this is the secret of the Christian life, to make the inclusive sacrifice. Religious life is inevitably tedious when it consists of a conscious yielding of our smaller things and a withholding of our central strength. It is one thing to surrender individual pounds; it is

<sup>1</sup> From *Life in the Heights*. Copyright, 1925, by Harper & Brothers.

quite another thing to consecrate our wealth. It is one thing to build altars here and there on the road; it is quite another thing to consecrate the journey. It is one thing to be religious in spasmodic conflicts, but it is quite another thing to hallow the entire campaign. If our self is kept back from the Lord, our religion will be a procession of reluctances and irritations. Every circumstance will present a separate problem instead of being caught up in the sweep of a mighty consecration. And that is the trouble with a great many people. They try to be religious in smaller surrenders, while the great surrender has never been made. And these smaller surrenders encounter curbs and restraints, and the soul is annoyed and discordant. The large surrender brings us into God's large place. We pass into the glorious freedom of God's children, and His statutes become our songs.

## 32. SORROWFUL, YET ALWAYS REJOICING<sup>1</sup>

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I PET. 1:6, 7

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice!" These fountains of spiritual joy shoot into the light at most startling and unexpected places. Their favourite haunt seems to be the heart of the desert. They are commonly associated with a land of drought. In these Scriptural records I so often find the fountain bursting through the sand, the song lifting its pæan out of the night. If the text is a well of cool and delicious water, the context is frequently arid waste. "*Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now . . . ye have been put to grief.*" A present rejoicing set in the midst of an environing grief! A profound and refreshing satisfaction, even when the surface of the life is possessed by drought! I never expected to find a fountain in so unpromising a waste. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice!" Who ever expected to find a well in that Sahara? As I trod the hot burning sands of "reviling" and "persecuting" and false accusing, little did I anticipate encountering a fountain of spiritual delight. Let us once again contemplate the strange conjunction. "Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Capernaum!" This on the one hand. And on the other hand, "A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him." And between the two, "Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit." Again, I say, I am amazed at the setting. If life were a prolonged marriage-feast, one might anticipate hearing the happy bells at every corner of the way; but to hear the joyous peal in the hours of grievous midnight and eclipse arrests the heart in keen and strained surprise. "These things have I said unto you, that My joy may be in you." "My joy!"

<sup>1</sup> From *The Redeemed Family of God*, George H. Doran, 1912.

And yet Calvary loomed only a hand's-breadth off, just twenty-four hours away! I thought the joy bells might have been heard away back in Nazareth, in the beauty and serenity of a secluded village life, or on some quiet evening, with His friends on the Galilean lake; but I never anticipated hearing them at Calvary's base, in full view of shame and crucifixion. "My joy!" "One of you shall betray Me." It is a marvellous conjunction, but one which is almost a commonplace in the Christian Scriptures. "They received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost." It is a mysterious, yet glorious wedlock. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now . . . ye have been put to grief." What is the suggestion of this apparently forced and incongruous union? The suggestion is this, that the spiritual joy of the redeemed life is continuous, and is not conditioned by the changing moods of the transient day. Spiritual delights are not dried up when I pass into the seasons of material drought. When the shadows settle down upon my life, and my experiences darken into night, the night is not to be without its cheery and illuminating presence. The place of the midnight is to be as "the land of the midnight sun." There shall be light enough to enable me to read the promises, to see my way, and to perceive the gracious presence of my Lord. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Therefore the shadow need not annihilate my joy. My temporary grief need not expunge my spiritual delights. The funeral knell of bereavement may be tolling in the outer rooms of the life, while in the most secret places may be heard the joy bells of trustful communion with God. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now . . . ye have been put to grief."

"*Wherein ye greatly rejoice.*" If our spiritual joy is to be continuous and persuasive, sending its pure vitalising ray even through the season of grief, we shall have to see to it that it is adequately nourished and sustained. Now, the nutriment of joy is to be found in appropriate thought. Happiness is usually the resultant of sensations, the ephemeral product of sensationalisms, having the uncertain life of the things on which it depends. Joy is the product of deep, quiet, steady, appropriate thought. Thought provides the oxygen in which the bright, cheery flame of love is sustained. What kind of thought is required? "*Wherein ye rejoice!*" In what? The rejoicing emerges from an atmosphere of thought—the thought which is contained in the previous verses, and which formed the basis of our last exposition. It is a contemplation of the possibilities and dynamics of the redeemed life. The possibilities stretch away in a most glorious and alluring panorama: "a living

hope"; "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away"; "a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." The dynamics are no less wealthy than the prospects: the "great mercy" of the Father; "the resurrection of Jesus from the dead"; "the power" of the Holy Ghost! These constitute the oxygenating thought of the Christian redemption. If the soul be immersed in it, faint sparks will be kindled into fervent flames, and timid desires will be strengthened into confident rejoicing. "As I mused, the fire burnt." Let mind and heart make their home in the spacious thoughts of God, and there will be born in the life a moral and spiritual glow which will not be chilled by any transient cloud, nor extinguished by the storms of the most tempestuous night. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice."

"Though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in *manifold trials*." The "manifold trials" will come. Antagonisms may rush down upon us from north, south, east, and west, and may twist and wrench our lives into strange bewilderments, and yet the continuous thread of spiritual rejoicing need never be broken. Our affairs may be tossed into incredible complications, and yet "the joy of the Lord may be our strength." The pleasing air of music, which in its simplicity a child might hum, may appear to be lost as it passes into the maze of tortuous variations and complications, but an expert ear can detect the continuity of the primal air beneath all the accretions of the voluminous sound. The air of simple spiritual rejoicing, which may be clearly heard when life is plain and serene, may be continued when life becomes complex and burdened, torn and harassed by "manifold trials." We may still hear the sweet primitive air of Christian rejoicing. I am not surprised to hear the sounds of rejoicing from Paul's life, when he was holding precious and sanctified intercourse with such beloved friends as Prisca and Aquila. But when the apostle is "put to grief through manifold trials," and life becomes dark, heavy, and complicated, how will it fare with him then? "The gaoler thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And it came to pass that at the midnight"—that is what I want to know about—"at the midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." It is the old air, rising through the pains and burden of a harassed and sorely tried life. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

Now, these "manifold trials" assume many guises and employ varied weapons of painful inquisition. Some of them may be found in the antagonism of men. Loyalty to truth may be confronted with persecution. A beautiful ministry may be given an evil interpretation.

Our beneficence may be maligned. Our very leniency may be vituperated and proclaimed as a device of the devil. This may be one of the guises of "the manifold trials." Or our antagonism may be found in the apparent hostility of our circumstances. Success is denied us. Every way we take seems to bristle with difficulties. Every street we enter proves to be a *cul de sac*. We never emerge into an airy and spacious prosperity. We pass our days in material straits. Such may be another of the guises of "the manifold trials." Or it may be that our antagonist dwells in the realm of our own flesh. We suffer incessant pain. We are just a bundle of exquisite nerves. The streets of the city are instruments of torture. The bang of a door shakes the frail house to its base. We are the easy victims of physical depression. Who knows but that this may have been Paul's "thorn in the flesh"? At any rate, it is one of "the manifold trials" by which many of our brethren are put to grief. I will go no further with the enumeration, because I am almost impatient to once again declare the evangel which proclaims that behind all these apparent antagonisms we may have the unceasing benediction of the joy of our Lord. It is possible—I declare it, not as my personal attainment, but as a glorious possibility which is both yours and mine—it is possible to get so deep into the thought and purpose of God, and to dwell so near His very heart, as to "count it all joy" when we "fall into manifold trials," because of that mystic spiritual alchemy by which trials are changed into blessings and our antagonists transformed into our slaves.

Can we just now nestle a little more closely into the loving purpose of God? Why are antagonisms allowed to range themselves across our way? Why are there any blind streets which bar our progress? Why does not labour always issue in success? Why are "manifold trials" permitted? We may find a partial response in the words of my text. They are permitted for "*the proof*" of our faith. That is the purposed ministry of the sharp antagonism and the cloudy day—"the proof of your faith." Now, to "prove" the faith means much more than to test it. First of all, it means to *reveal* it. To prove the faith is to prove it to others. God wants to reveal and emphasise your faith, and so He sends the cloud. May we not say that the loveliness of the moonlight is revealed and emphasised by the ministry of the cloud? It is when there are a few clouds about, and the moonlight transfiguring them, that the glory of the moon herself is declared. And it is when the cloud is in the life that the radiance of our faith is proved and proclaimed. How conspicuously the calm, steady faith of our glorified Queen was proved by the clouds which so frequently gathered about

her life! The “manifold trials” set out in grand relief that which might have remained a commonplace. Light which fringes the cloud is light which is beautified. Faith which gleams from behind the trial is faith which is glorified. It is the hard circumstance which sets in relief the quality of our devotion. As I listened to a thrush singing in the cold dawn of a winter’s morning, I thought its song seemed sweeter and richer than when heard in the advanced days of spring. The wintry setting emphasised the quality of the strain. Perhaps if we heard the nightingale in the glare of the noon tide, the song would not arrest us as when it proceeds from the depths of the night. The shades and loneliness add something to the sweetness. “And at midnight Paul and Silas sang.” That is the song which is heard by the fellow-prisoners and startles them into wonder. The trial came and your faith was “proved.” You lost your money, and men discovered your devotion. Your gold, the finest of your gold, the most rare and exquisite among your treasures, was destroyed and perished; but in the hour of your calamity your faith was proved, and men bowed in spiritual wonder before the mystery of the Divine. Your trial was your triumph; the place of apparent defeat became the hallowed shrine of a glorious conquest. “Now are ye in grief through manifold trials,” that in the midst of the cloud the Lord might “prove” and reveal your faith.

But “the manifold trials” do more than reveal the faith. There is another ministry wrapped up in this suggestive word “prove.” The trial that reveals the faith also *strengthens* and *confirms* it. The faith that is “proved” is more richly endowed. The strong wind and rain which try the tree are also the ministers of its invigoration. The round of the varying seasons makes the tree “well seasoned,” and solidifies and enriches its fibre. It is the negative which develops the strength of the affirmative. It is antagonism which cultivates the wrestler. It is the trial which makes the saint. The man who sustains his hold upon God through one trial will find it easier to confront the next trial and exploit it for eternal good. And so these “manifold trials” prove our faith. They reveal and they enrich our resources. They strengthen and refine our spiritual apprehension. They may strip us of our material possessions, “*the gold that perisheth*,” but they endow us with the wealth of that “inheritance” which is “incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

And, finally, there is one other radiant glimpse of the resplendent issues of a “proved” and invigorated faith: “That the proof of your faith . . . might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Our "proved" faith is to come to its crown in a manifestation of praise and glory and honour. When Jesus appears, these things are to appear with Him. The trial of our faith is to issue in "*praise.*" And what shall be the praise? On that great day of unveiling, when all things are made clear, I shall discover what my trials have accomplished. I shall perceive that they were all the time the instruments of a gracious ministry, strengthening me even when I thought I was being impoverished. The wonderful discovery will urge my soul into song, and praise will break upon my lips. "*Found unto praise and glory.*" And whose shall be the glory? When the Lord appears, many other things will become apparent. What I thought hard will now appear as gracious. What I recoiled from as severe I shall find to be merciful. What I esteemed as forgetfulness will reveal itself as faithfulness. He was nearest when I thought Him farthest away. He was faithful even when I was faithless. At His appearing I shall apprehend and appreciate my Lord. "*The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.*" "*Found unto praise and glory and honour.*" And whence shall flow the honour? I shall find that when the Lord sent a trial, and by the trial revealed my faith, many a fainting heart took courage, and by the beauty of my devotion many a shy soul was secretly wooed into the kingdom of God. I never knew it, but at His appearing this shall also appear. This discovery shall be my coronation. The supreme honours of heaven are reserved for those who have brought others there. "*They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.*" And so by the cloud of manifold trials God leads me into the spacious sovereignty of glory, praise, and honour.

*God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
With blessings on your head.*

## *VI. Lectures*

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### 33. THE PERILS OF THE PREACHER<sup>1</sup>

"Lest . . . I myself should be a castaway." I COR. 9:27.

I begin our consideration of the perils of the preacher by quoting this startling word of the Apostle Paul. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And, as you well know, the word which is here translated "castaway," and in the Revised Version is translated "rejected," is applied to things that cannot bear the standard test, that reveal themselves to be counterfeit and worthless, like coins which have no true "ring" about them, and which are flung aside as spurious and base. And the Apostle Paul foresees the possible peril of his becoming a counterfeit coin in the sacred currency, a spurious dealer in sublime realities, a worthless guide to "the unsearchable riches of Christ." He sees the insurgent danger of men who are busy among holy things becoming profane. A man may be dealing with "gold thrice refined," and yet he himself may be increasingly mingled with the dross of the world. He may lead others into the heavenly way and he may lose the road himself. He may be diligent in his holy calling and yet be deepeningly degenerate. It is the ominous forecast of what is perhaps life's saddest and most pathetic tragedy, the spectacle of a man who, having "preached to others," should himself become "a castaway."

Now the Apostle Paul foresaw the peril, and studiously and prayerfully provided against it. And you and I have been chosen to walk along His road, and we shall encounter all the dangers that infest it. None of us will be immune from their besetment. Perils are ever the attendants of privilege, and they are thickest round about the most exalted stations. I suppose that every profession and every trade has its own peculiar enemies, just as every kind of flower is attacked by

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Preacher: His Life and Work*. Harper & Brothers, 1912.

its own peculiar pests. And I suppose that every profession might claim that these distinctive microbes are most subtle and plentiful in its own particular sphere of service. And yet I strongly believe that the artisan who works with his hands, or the trader who is busy in commerce, or the professional man who labours in law, or in medicine, or in literature, or in music, or art, is not able to conceive the insidious and deadly perils which infest the life of a minister. The pulpit is commonly regarded as a charmed circle, where "the destruction that wasteth at noonday" never arrives. We are looked upon as the children of favour, "delicately apparelléd," shielded in many ways from the cutting blasts that sweep across the common life. It is supposed there is many a bewitching temptation that never displays its shining wares at our window! There is many a gnawing care that never shows its teeth at our gate! We are told we have the genial times, and the "soft raiment," and that for us life is more a garden than a battlefield.

But, gentlemen, the fatal defect in the statement is this:—it reasons as though "privilege" spells "protection," and as though soft conditions provide immunity. It reasons as though a garden is a fortress, and as though a favoured life is a strong defence. It reasons as though a garden can never be a battlefield, when after all a garden was the scene of the hardest fighting in the battle of Waterloo. Privilege never confers security: it rather provides the conditions of the fiercest strife. I gladly and gratefully recognise that the minister is laden with many privileges, but I also recognise that the measure of our privileges is just the measure of our dangers, that the inventory of our garden would also give an inventory of the destructive pests that haunt every flower, and shrub, and tree. It is literally and awfully true that "where grace abounds" death also may abound, for our spiritual favours may be either "a savour of life unto life or of death unto death." We may lead people into wealth and we ourselves may be counterfeit: we may preach to others while we ourselves are castaways. I propose, therefore, to examine some of these perils which fatten upon privilege, these enemies which will haunt you to the very end of your ministerial life.

The first peril which I will name, and I name it first because its touch is so fatal, is that of *deadening familiarity with the sublime*. You will not have been long in the ministry before you discover that it is possible to be fussily busy about the Holy Place and yet to lose the wondering sense of the Holy Lord. We may have much to do with religion and yet not be religious. We may become mere guide-posts when we were intended to be guides. We may indicate the way,

and yet not be found in it. We may be professors but not pilgrims. Our studies may be workshops instead of "upper rooms." Our share in the table-provisions may be that of analysts rather than guests. We may become so absorbed in words that we forget to eat the Word. And the consummation of the subtle peril may be this: we may come to assume that fine talk is fine living, that expository skill is deep piety, and while we are fondly hugging the non-essentials the veritable essence escapes.

I think this is one of the most insidious, and perhaps the predominant peril in a preacher's life. A man may live in mountain-country and lose all sense of the heights. And that is a terrible impoverishment, when mountain-country comes to have the ordinary significance of the plains. The preacher is called upon to dwell among the stupendous concerns of human interest. The mountainous aspects of life are his familiar environment. He lives almost every hour in sight of the immensities and the eternities—the awful sovereignty of God, and the glorious yet cloud-capped mysteries of redeeming grace. But here is the possible tragedy: he may live in constant sight of these tremendous presences and may cease to see them. They may come to be mere "lay figures" of the study, no longer the appalling dignities which prostrate the soul in adoration and awe. That is our peril. We have to be constantly talking about these things, and the talking may be briskly continued even when the things themselves have been lost. We may retain our interest in philosophy, and lose our reverence. We may keep up a busy traffic in words, but "the awe of the heights" no longer makes us tremble with urgent actuality. We may talk about the mountains, and we may do it as blind insensitive children of the plains. The plenitude of our privileges may make us numb. "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon?" The calamity is that we may do so and never know it.

The second peril in the preacher's life which I will name is that of *deadening familiarity with the commonplace*. I have mentioned the possibility of our becoming callous to the presence of the heights: there is an equally subtle peril of our becoming dead to the bleeding tragedies of common life. Dark presences which come to others only as occasional and startling visitors are in our fellowship every day. They move in our daily surroundings. Experiences which move and arrest the business-man, because they are unusual, are the ordinary furniture of our lives. And the ever possible danger is this, that in becoming accustomed to tragedy we may also become callous.

There is, for example, our familiarity with death. I know there is

something about Death so mysterious, so imperious, that he never passes as quite an ordinary presence. The chill air of his passing is never altogether lost. And yet you will find it is possible to be strangely unmoved in the house of death. There will be breaking hearts around you, among whom Death has come like some cruel beast, heedlessly on his way to the water-courses, and they are feeling that they will never be able to lift themselves again into the sweet sunny light and air. And you may be like an indifferent outsider in the tragedy! I know that it may be one of God's merciful dealings with us, as a necessity of our labour, to put the gracious cushion of custom between us and the immediate blows of dark and heavy circumstance. No man could do his work if the vital drain were to be unrelieved. If custom gave us no defence we should faint from sheer exhaustion. The impact of the blow upon us is restrained in order that we may minister to those upon whom it has fallen with naked and staggering force. But that possible ministry becomes impossible if the cushion becomes a stone. If familiarity implies insensibility then our powers of consolation are lost.

Now this is one of our perils, and it is very real and immediate. The peril can be avoided, but there it is, one of the possible dangers in your way. Familiarity may be deadly, and we may be as dead men in the usually disturbing presences of sorrow, and pain, and death. The pathetic may cease to melt us, the tragic may cease to shock us. We may lose our power to weep. The very fountain of our tears may be dried up. The visitations which arouse and vivify our fellowmen may put us into a fatal sleep. A stupor begotten of familiarity may make us remote from the common need. To use the apostle's phrase, we may become "past feeling."

The third ministerial peril is *the possible perversion of our emotional life*. The preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ demands and creates in the preacher a certain power of worthy emotion, and this very emotion becomes the centre of new ministerial danger. For the emotions can become perverted. They may become unhealthily intense and inflammatory. They may become defiled. The emotional may so easily become the neurotic. I do not know just how to express the danger I see. A preacher's emotion may be so constantly and so profoundly wrought upon that his moral defences are imperiled. Exaggerated emotion can be like a flood that will overwhelm and submerge his moral dykes, and plunge him into irretrievable disaster.

I remember one very eventful day when I had a long walk with Hugh Price Hughes through the city of London. In the course of our

conversation he suddenly stopped, and gripping my arm in his impulsive way, he said, "Jowett, the evangelical preacher is always on the brink of the abyss!" There may be excessive colouring in the judgment, but it indicates a grave peril which it is imperative to name, and against which we should be on our guard. I think I know what he meant. Preaching that sways the preacher's emotions, moving him like a gale upon the sea, makes great demands upon the nerves, and sometimes produces nervous exhaustion. That is to say, the evangelical preacher, with his constant business in great facts and verities that sway the feelings, may become the victim of nervous depression, and in his nervous impoverishment his moral defences may be relaxed, the enemy may leap within his gates, and his spirit may be imprisoned in dark and carnal bondage. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear," and "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

And now let me mention a peril which will be more evident than the one I have just named, because we meet it along every road of life, and because we make its acquaintance long before we take up the actual work of the ministry. I mean *the perilous gravitation of the world*. I say you may meet that danger everywhere, but nowhere will you meet it in a more insidious and persistent fashion than in the Christian ministry. It is round about us like a malaria, and we may become susceptible to its contagion. It offers itself as a climate, and we may be led into accepting it as the atmosphere of our lives. I suppose that one of the deepest characteristics of worldliness is an illicit spirit of compromise. It calls itself by many agreeable names such as "expediency," "tactfulness," "diplomacy," and it sometimes ascends to higher rank and claims kinship with "geniality," "sociability," and "friendship." But, despite this fine borrowed attire, the worldly spirit of compromise is just the sacrifice of the moral ideal to the popular standard, and the subjection of personal conviction to current opinion. There is a half-cynical counsel given in the Book of Ecclesiastes which exactly describes what I am seeking to express. "Be not righteous overmuch. . . . Be not overmuch wicked." I think this moral advice enshrines the very genius of worldliness. Worldly compromise takes the medium-line between white and black, and wears an ambiguous grey. It is a partisan of neither midnight nor noon. It prefers the twilight, which is just a mixture of midnight and noon and is equally related to both. It is, therefore, a very specious presence, fraternising with all sorts and conditions of men, nodding acquaintantly to the saint, and intimately recognising the sinner, at home everywhere, mixing with the worshippers in the temple, or with the money-changers in

the temple courts. Grey is a very useful colour, it is in keeping with a wedding or a funeral. And yet the word of Holy Writ is clear and decisive, raising the most exalted standard: "Keep thy garments always white."

Now you will meet that spirit of worldly compromise, and you will meet it in its most seductive form. It will seek to determine the character of your personal life. It will entice you to wear grey habits when you mix with the business-men of your congregation, and to "talk grey" in your conversation with them. A certain suavity or urbanity will offer itself as a medium, and you will loll about with relaxed moral ideals. This is no idle fancy. I am describing the road along which many a minister has passed to deadly degeneracy and impotence. We are tempted to leave our "noontide lights" behind in our study, and to move among men of the world with a dark lantern which we can manipulate to suit our company. We pay the tribute of smiles to the low business standard. We pay the tribute of laughter to the fashionable jest. We pay the tribute of easy tolerance to ambiguous pleasures. We soften everything to a comfortable acquiescence. We seek to be "all things to all men" to please all. We "run with the hare" and we "hunt with the hounds." We try to "serve God and mammon." We become the victims of illicit compromise. There is nothing distinctive about our character. It is neither one thing nor another. We are of the kind described by the Prophet Isaiah: "Thy wine is mixed with water," or like those portrayed by Jeremiah: "Reprobate silver shall men call thee."

But in the perilous gravitation of worldliness there is more than an illicit spirit of compromise: there is what I will call the fascination of the glittering. All through our ministry we are exposed to the temptations which met our Lord in the wilderness, and which met Him again and again before he reached the cross. "All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." It was the presentation of carnal splendour, the offer of an immediate prize. The tempter used the lure of the "showy," and he sought to eclipse the vision of reality. He used the glittering to entice the eyes away from the "gold thrice refined."

That peril will meet you on the very day your ministry begins. Nay, it is with you now in the days of preparation. Even now you may be arrested by fireworks and you may lose the vision of the stars. On your ordination day you may be the victim of worldliness, and your soul may be prostrate before mammon. You may be seeking "the Kingdoms of the world and the glory of them"; in quest of "glitter"

rather than true "gold." We are tempted to covet a showy eloquence rather than the deep, unobtrusive "spirit of power." We may become more intent on full pews than on redeeming souls. We may be more concerned to have a swelling membership-roll than to have the names of our people "written in Heaven." We may be more keen for "the praises of men" than for "the good pleasure of God." These are the perils of worldliness. Our besetting peril is to go after the "showy," to "strive," and "cry," to let our voice be heard "in the streets," to follow the glitter instead of "the gleam," and to be satisfied if our names are sounded pleasantly in the crumbling halls of worldly fame.

I have thus mentioned many perils which will meet you in your calling, and they have this common and fatal tendency, to snare you away from God. They will lead you away from "the snows of Lebanon," from the great gathering-ground of your resources, where the mighty rivers rise which bring to men the dynamic of a strong and efficient ministry. And, surely, of all pathetic sights on God's earth there is none more pathetic than a preacher of the gospel who, by the benumbing power of custom, or by the wiles and guiles of the world, has been separated from his God! For when a preacher, by an unhallowed absorption in the mere letter of truth or by a successful invasion of worldliness, gets away from God, the direful consequences are immediate and destructive. Let me mention some of the results.

First of all, our characters will lose their spirituality. We shall lack that fine fragrance which makes people know that we dwell in "the King's gardens." There will be no "heavenly air" about our spirits. Atmospheres will not be mysteriously changed by our presence. We shall no longer bring the strength of mountain-air into close and fusty fellowships. And, surely, this ought to be one of the most gracious services of a Christian minister,—by his very presence to create a climate by which the faint and overburdened are revived. There is an exquisite line in Paul's portrayal of his friend Onesiphorus which describes this very characteristic of ministerial service. "He oft refreshed me," and the refreshment is just the bringing of fresh air, a vitalizing breath, a restoring climate for faint and weary souls! The coming of Onesiphorus was like the opening of a window to one held in close imprisonment. He brought an atmosphere with him, and he himself had found it in the breathing of the Holy Ghost. My brethren, it is our spirituality that provides that atmosphere of refreshment, and it is active in our silences as well as in our speech. If we are snared away from God that atmosphere is devitalized, our personal

"air" loses its power of quickening, and no "faint-heart" calls down blessings as we pass by.

But a second thing happens when, for any cause, we are separated from the Lord whom we have vowed to serve. Our speech lacks a mysterious impressiveness. We are wordy but we are not mighty. We are eloquent but we do not persuade. We are reasonable but we do not convince. We preach much but we accomplish little. We teach but we do not woo. We make a "show of power" but men do not move. Men come and go, they may be interested or amused, but they do not bow in penitent surrender at the feet of the Lord. We go on talking, talking, talking, and the haunts of "the evil one" ring with scorn of our futility. Our words are just the "enticing words of man's wisdom," they are not "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

And as it is with our preaching so it is with our enterprises. If our perils overwhelm us our enterprises become pastimes rather than crusades. We are busy but we are futile. We may be always active but the strongholds do not fall. We pass multitudes of resolutions but nobody quakes. We form clubs and societies but there is no vital movement towards God. The central fact of the matter is this: when a preacher is snared away from God and from the good-pleasure of God he does not count, and he is, therefore, not counted, and evil dances flippantly along the open road heedless of his presence, because he has no magic weapon by which it can be either crippled or destroyed.

But I turn to a more positive aspect of my theme. How can all these perils be avoided? Nay, how can we make our perils minister to a richer, stronger, and more fruitful life? For that is life's true victory, not to ignore dangers but to despoil them. It is possible to take the strength of a peril and enlist it in our own resources. That is the privilege of temptation: we can sack it and transfer the wealth of its strength into the treasury of our own will. That is a great principle! The minister's life has many perils, and he has, therefore, many possible stores of enrichment. We cannot affirm this to ourselves too often and too confidently: conquered perils become allies: in every victory there is a transfer of dynamics. Perils may indicate our possible impoverishment: they equally indicate our possible enrichment.

How, then, is it to be done? By studious and reverent regard to the supreme commonplaces of the spiritual life. We must assiduously attend to the culture of our souls. We must sternly and systematically make time for prayer, and for the devotional reading of the Word of God. We must appoint private seasons for the deliberate and personal

appropriation of the Divine Word, for self-examination in the presence of its warnings, for self-humbling in the presence of its judgments, for self-heartening in the presence of its promises, and for self-invigoration in the presence of its glorious hopes. In the midst of our fussy, restless activities, in all the multitudinous trifles which, like a cloud of dust, threaten to choke our souls, the minister must fence off his quiet and secluded hours, and suffer no interference or obtrusion. I offer that counsel with particular urgency now that I have come to labour in this country. I am profoundly convinced that one of the gravest perils which beset the ministry of this country is a restless scattering of energies over an amazing multiplicity of interests, which leaves no margin of time or of strength for receptive and absorbing communion with God. We are tempted to be always "on the run," and to measure our fruitfulness by our pace and by the ground we cover in the course of the week!

Gentlemen, we are not always doing the most business when we seem to be most busy. We may think we are truly busy when we are really only restless, and a little studied retirement would greatly enrich our returns. We are great only as we are God-possessed; and scrupulous appointments in the upper room with the Master will prepare us for the toil and hardships of the most strenuous campaign. We must, therefore, hold firmly and steadily to this primary principle, that of all things that need doing this need is supreme, to live in intimate fellowship with God. Let us steadily hold a reasonable sense of values, and assign each appointed duty to its legitimate place. And in any appointment of values this would surely be the initial judgment, that nothing can be well done if we drift away from God. Neglected spiritual fellowship means futility all along the road.

But the discipline of the soul must be serious and studious. This high culture must not be governed by haphazard or caprice. There must be purpose and method and regularity. And you may depend upon culture in this serious way, it is a travail and not a pastime. If it were easy it might scarcely be worth counselling: it is tremendously difficult, but its rewards are infinite. One of the most cultured spirits in modern Methodism, a man whose style is as strong as his thoughts are lofty, has recently given this judgment as he looked back upon the years of his ministry: "I have not failed to study: I have not failed to visit: I have not failed to write and meditate: but I have failed to pray. . . . Now why have I not prayed? Sometimes because I did not like it: at other times because I hardly dared: and yet at other times because I had something else to do. Let us be very frank. It is a grand

thing to get a praying minister. . . . I have heard men talk about prayer who never prayed in their lives. They thought they did: but when you have heard them, they made their own confession in a ruthless way." These sentences lift the veil upon a naked experience, and they expose the solemn fact that prayer is very costly, even at the expense of blood, and that churches which have praying ministers may not realize the travail by which the power is gained. We are permitted to look upon our Master as he prays. "In the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." It was a holy and costly business. "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." There was something here which we can never share, and yet there is something which we must share if we are leagued with the Lord in the ministry of intercession, and enter into "the fellowship of his sufferings."

Perhaps I cannot better illustrate the costliness of this intensive soul-culture than by the example of Dr. Andrew Bonar. Dr. Bonar laboured in Scotland a generation or two ago, and he adorned his ministry by a very saintly life and by very fruitful service. He kept a private diary or journal, contained in two small volumes, containing regular entries from 1828 to within a few weeks of his death in 1892. His daughter has permitted this most priceless record of a soul's pilgrimage to be given to the world, "in the belief that the voice now silent on earth will still be heard in these pages, calling on us as from the other world to be 'followers of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises.'"

Let me give you one or two extracts from this journal. "By the grace of God and the strength of His Holy Spirit I desire to lay down the rule not to speak to man until I have spoken to God: not to do anything with my hands until I have been upon my knees: not to read letters or papers until I have read something of the Holy Scriptures." . . . "In prayer in the wood for some time, having set apart three hours for devotion: felt drawn out much to pray for that peculiar fragrance which believers have about them, who are very much in fellowship with God." . . . "Yesterday got a day to myself for prayer. With me every time of prayer, or almost every time, begins with a conflict." . . . "It is my deepest regret that I pray so little. I should count the days, not by what I have of new instances of usefulness, but by the times I have been enabled to pray in faith, and to take hold upon God." . . . "I see that unless I keep up short prayer every day throughout the whole day, at intervals, I lose the spirit of prayer." . . . "too much work

without corresponding prayer. To-day setting myself to pray. The Lord forthwith seems to send a dew upon my soul." . . . "Was enabled to spend part of Thursday in the church, praying. Have had great help in study since then." . . . "Last night could do little else but converse with the Lord about the awakening of souls, and ask it earnestly." . . . "Passed six hours to-day in prayer and Scripture-reading, confessing sin, and seeking blessing for myself and the parish."

Words like these, written for no eye but God's to see, give deep significance to the sentence I quoted from our distinguished Methodist friend: "It is a grand thing to get a praying minister." And another thing becomes evident in the light of the journal: real prayer is the sharing of "the travail which makes God's Kingdom come." Andrew Bonar was a strong minister of "the grace of the Lord Jesus," and in the wrestling communion of prayer he became mighty with God and man. Men of his type, whose souls are elevated and refined by lofty fellowships, approach everything "from above," and not "from beneath." The trouble with many of us is just this,—we come to our work from low levels, from the common angle, with the ordinary points of view. In that way we come to our sermons, and to our pulpits, and to our pastoral work, and to the business affairs of the Church. We are "from beneath." We do not come upon our labours "from above," with the sense of the heavenly about us, with quiet feeling of elevation, and strong power of vision, and the perception of proportion and values. Men who are "from beneath" belittle and degrade the things they touch. Men who are "from above" elevate them, and give distinction and dignity to the meanest service. And if any minister is to live "in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and to have this lofty bearing and this uplifting constraint in his common work, if he is to be pure and purifying, he must learn to "pray without ceasing."

And I would add one further word in reference to the discipline of character by the culture of the soul, and it is this: it is only by this primary culture that we gain those secondary virtues which play so vital a part in our moral defences, and in the effectiveness of our work. The fragrance of character usually rises from the apparently subordinate virtues, the very virtues which are commonly neglected or ignored. All the ten lepers had faith, only one had gratitude, and he is the one who remains beauteous and winsome in the regard of the Lord. And this very grace of gratitude fills a great part in the minister's life, and so do courtesy, and patience, and that wonderfully beautiful thing we call considerateness, and forbearance, and good-temper. I

have called them secondary virtues, but I am afraid I have degraded their rank, so high and so princely a place do they fill in the shining equipment of the Christian ministry. And I name them here in order to reaffirm my conviction that such strong and attractive graces are not "works"; they are "fruits," the natural and spontaneous growth of much communion with the Lord. We may be fragrant in character, having "beauty" as well as "strength," if we abide in the King's gardens.

Gentlemen, I have mentioned our perils, and I have suggested our resources, and the one is more than sufficient for the other. A calling without difficulty would not be worth our choice. You will have traps and enemies, allurements and besetments, all along your way, but "grace abounds," and "the joy of the Lord is your strength."

## 34. THE PREACHER IN HIS PULPIT<sup>1</sup>

"The service of the sanctuary." Num. 7:9.

I am to speak to-day on the preacher's life and ministry in the pulpit. There is no sphere of labour more endowed with holy privilege and sacred promise, and there is no sphere where a man's impoverishment can be so painfully obtrusive. The pulpit may be the centre of overwhelming power, and it may be the scene of tragic disaster. What is the significance of our calling when we stand in the pulpit? It is our God-appointed office to lead men and women who are weary or wayward, exultant or depressed, eager or indifferent, into "the secret place of the Most High." We are to help the sinful to the fountain of cleansing, the bondslaves to the wonderful songs of deliverance. We are to help the halt and the lame to recover their lost nimbleness. We are to help the broken-winged into the healing light of "the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We are to help the sad into the sunshine of grace. We are to help the buoyant to clothe themselves with "the garment of praise." We are to help to redeem the strong from the atheism of pride, and the weak from the atheism of despair. We are to help little children to see the glorious attractiveness of God, and we are to help the aged to realise the encompassing care of the Father and the assurance of the eternal home. This is something of what our calling means when we enter the pulpit of the sanctuary. And our possible glory is this, we may do it. And our possible shame is this, we may hinder it. When "the sick and the diseased" are gathered together we may be ministers or barriers to their healing. We may be added encumbrances or spiritual helps. We may be stumbling-blocks over which our people have to climb in their desire to commune with God.

Now we may not be able to command intellectual power. Ours may not be the gift of exegetical insight, and luminous interpretation, and forceful and unique expression. We may never astound men by a dis-

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Preacher: His Life and Work*. Harper & Brothers, 1912.

play of cleverness, or by massive argumentative structures compel their admiration. But there is another and a better way at our command. With the powers and means that are ours we can build a plain, simple, honest altar, and we can invoke and secure the sacred fire. If we can never be "great" in the pulpit, when judged by worldly values, we can be prayerfully ambitious to be pure, and sincere, and void of offence. If the medium is not "big" we can make sure that it is clean, and that there is an open and uninterrupted channel for the waters of grace.

To this end I think it is needful, before we go into the pulpit, to define to ourselves, in simple decisive terms, what we conceive to be the purpose of the service. Let us clearly formulate the end at which we aim. Let us put it into words. Don't let it hide in the cloudy realm of vague assumptions. Let us arrest ourselves in the very midst of our assumptions, and compel ourselves to name and register our ends. Let us take a pen in hand, and in order that we may still further banish the peril of vacuity let us commit to paper our purpose and ambition for the day. Let us give it the objectivity of a mariner's chart: let us survey our course and steadily contemplate our haven. If, when we turn to the pulpit stair, some angel were to challenge us for the statement of our mission, we ought to be able to make immediate answer, without hesitancy or stammering, that this or that is the urgent errand on which we seek to serve our Lord to-day. But the weakness of the pulpit is too often this:—we are prone to drift through a service when we ought to steer. Too often "we are out on the ocean sailing," but we have no destination: we are "out for anywhere," and for nowhere in particular. The consequence is, the service has the fashion of a vagrancy when it ought to be possessed by the spirit of a crusade. On the other hand a lofty, single, imperial end knits together the detached elements in the service, it makes everything co-operative, and all are related and vitalized by the pervasive influence of the common purpose. "Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve." If the end we seek is "the glory of God" everything in the service will pay tribute to the quest.

Now let us see what this clearly formulated sense of sacred purpose will do for us. First of all, it will ensure the strong, gracious presences of reverence and order. Irreverence emerges when there is no sense of "the high calling." We "trample the courts of the Lord" when we lose our sight of the gleam. Unless we see "the Lord, high and lifted up," irreverent and disorderly things will appear in our conduct of the service. We cannot keep them out. We shall sprawl and lounge about

the pulpit. We shall take little part in the worship we profess to lead. Our idle curiosity will be more active than our spiritual obedience. We shall be tempted to be flippant in tone, to be careless in speech, and sometimes we may be tripped into actual coarseness and vulgarity. The first necessity to a refined pulpit ministry is reverence, and if we are to be reverent our eyes must be stayed upon "The King in His Beauty."

But let me mention a second security which is attained when the service is dominated by some great and exalted end. It will defend the preacher from the peril of ostentatious display. He will have power, but it will not be an exhibition. He will have light, but in the glory he himself will be eclipsed. His ministry will be transparent, not opaque. The vision of his people will not be stayed on him, it will gaze beyond him to the exalted Lord. When I was in Northfield two years ago I went out early one morning to conduct a camp-meeting away in the woods. The camp-dwellers were two or three hundred men from the Water Street Mission in New York. At the beginning of the service prayer was offered for me, and the prayer opened with this inspired supplication: "O Lord we thank Thee for our brother. Now blot him out!" And the prayer continued: "Reveal Thy glory to us in such blazing splendour that he shall be forgotten." It was absolutely right and I trust the prayer was answered. But, gentlemen, if we ourselves are gazing upon the glory of the Lord we shall be blotted out in our own transparency. If we are seeking the glory of the Lord there will be about us a purity, and a simplicity, and a singleness of devotion which will minister to the unveiling of the King, and men will "see no man, save Jesus only." Everything in the service will be significant, but nothing will be obtrusive. Everything will meekly fall into place, and will contribute to a reverent and sober setting in which our Lord will be revealed, "full of grace and truth."

Now all this will mean a revolution in the way in which some parts of the service are conducted. I would have you seriously consider the pathetic, nay the tragic weakness of much of our devotional worship. We frequently fix our attention upon the sermon when we seek to account for the comparative impotency of a service, when perhaps the real cause of paralysis is to be found in our dead and deadening communion with God. There is nothing mightier than the utterance of spontaneous prayer when it is born in the depths of the soul. But there is nothing more dreadfully unimpressive than extemporary prayer which leaps about on the surfaces of things, a disorderly dance of empty words, going we know not whither,—a mob of words carrying no blood, bearing no secret of the soul, a whirl of insignificant

expressions, behind which there is no vital pulse, no silent cry from lone and desolate depths.

It is not difficult to trace some of these weaknesses in pulpit prayer to their deeper cause. First of all, they are to be accounted for by our own shallow spiritual experience. We cannot be strong leaders of intercession unless we have a deep and growing acquaintance with the secret ways of the soul. We need to know its sicknesses,—its times of defilement, and fainting, and despair. We must know its cries and moans when it has been trapped by sin, or when it has been wearied with the license of unhallowed freedom. And we must know the soul in its healings, when life is in the ascendant, when spiritual death has lost its sting, and the spiritual grave its victory. And we must know the soul in its convalescence, when weakness is being conquered as well as disease, and life is recovering its lost powers of song. And we must know the soul in its health, when exuberance has returned, and in its joyful buoyance it can “leap as an hart.” How are we going to lead a congregation in prayer if these things are hidden from us as in unknown worlds? I confess I often shrink from the obligation, when I think of the richly-experienced souls whom I have to lead in prayer and praise. I think of the depths and the heights of their knowledge of God. I think of their sense of sin. I think of their rapture in the blessedness of forgiveness. And I have to be their medium in public worship for the expression of their confessions, and their aspirations, and their adoring praise! I feel that I am like a shepherd’s pipe when they need an organ! They must often be “straitened” in me in the exercises of public communion. The preacher’s shallow experiences offer one explanation of the poverty of his intercession.

But there is a second reason why our public devotions are frequently so impoverished. It is to be found in our imperfect appreciation of the supreme and vital importance of these parts of our services. They are sometimes described as “the preliminaries,” matters merely concerning the threshold, a sort of indifferent passageway leading to a lighted room for the main performance! I do not know any word which is more significant of mistaken emphasis and mistaken values, and wherever it is truly descriptive of our devotions the congregation, which looks to the pulpit for sacred guidance will find barrenness and night. If we think of prayer as one of “the preliminaries” we shall treat it accordingly. We shall stumble up to it. We shall stumble through it. We shall say “just what comes to us,” for anything that “comes” will be as good as anything else! Anything will do for a “preliminary.” We have prepared the words we are to speak to man,

but any heedless speech will suffice for our communion with God! And so our prayerful people are chilled, and our prayerless people are hardened. We have offered unto the Lord God a "preliminary," and lo: "the heavens are as brass," and "the earth receives no rain."

And I would mention, as a third reason for the weakness and shallowness of public devotion, the preacher's lack of prayerfulness in private. If we are strangers to the way of communion in private we shall certainly miss it in public. The man who is much in "the way" instinctively finds the garden, and its fragrant spices, and its wonderfully bracing air, and he can lead others into it. But here, more than in anything else, our secret life will determine our public power. Men never learn to pray in public: they learn in private. We cannot put off our private habits and assume public ones with our pulpit robes. If prayer is an insignificant item in private it will be an almost irrelevant "preliminary" in public. If we are never in Gethsemane when alone we shall not find our way there with the crowd. If we never cry "out of the depths" when no one is near there will be no such cry when we are with the multitude. I repeat that our habits are fashioned in private, and a man cannot change his skin by merely putting on his gown.

I am fixing your thoughts upon this common weakness in pulpit devotions because I am persuaded it is here we touch the root of much of our pulpit incapacity. If men are unmoved by our prayers they are not likely to be profoundly stirred by our preaching. I cannot think that there will ever be more vital power in our sermons than in our intercessions. The power that upheaves the deepest life of the soul begins to move upon us while we commune with God. The climax may come in the sermon: The vital preparations are made in the devotions. I have heard pulpit intercessions so tremendous in their reach, so filled with God, so awe inspiring, so subduing, so melting, that it was simply impossible they should be followed by an unimpressive sermon. The "Way of the Lord" had been prepared. The soul was awake and on its knees, and the message came as the uplifting "power of God unto salvation." And on the other hand I have heard prayers so wooden, so leaden, so dead, or with only a show of life in loud tones and crude declamation, that it was simply impossible to have sermons full of the power of the Holy Ghost. I would therefore urge you, when you are in your pulpit, to regard the prayers as the essentials and not the "preliminaries" of the service, and to regard your sermon as a lamp whose arresting beams are to be fed by a holy oil which flows from the olive tree of sacred communion with God.

And there is a second "preliminary" in public worship which needs to be lifted into primary significance,—our reading of the word of God. Too frequently the Scripture-lesson is just something to be "got through." No careful and diligent work is given to its choice. No fine honour is assigned to it in the service. And the consequence is this, the "lesson" is one of the dead spots in the service, and its deadening influence chills the entire worship. The momentous message is given without momentousness, and it is devoid of even ordinary impressiveness which belongs to common literature. How few of us remember services where the Scripture-lesson gripped the congregation and held it in awed and intelligent wonder! They tell us that Newman's reading of the Scriptures at Oxford was as great a season as his preaching. I know one man who always lights up the Burial Service by the wonderful way in which he reads the resurrection chapter in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. While he reads you can see and feel the morn dawning, even though you are in the home of the dead! You should have heard Spurgeon read the 103d Psalm! It is a mighty experience when a lesson is so read that it becomes the sermon, and the living word grips without an exposition. I said, "without an exposition." But there are expositions which are given in our manner, in our demeanour, in the very tones of our voice, in our entire bearing. I have been told that there was a fine and impressive homage in the way in which John Angel James used to open his pulpit Bible, and an equally subduing impressiveness in the way in which he closed it. These are not little tricks, taught by elocutionists: they are the fruits of character. If they are learned as little tricks they will only add to the artificiality of the service: if they are "the fruits of the Spirit" they will tend to vitalize it.

If Scripture is to be impressively read it is of first importance that we understand it, that we have some idea of the general contour of the wonderful country, even though there are countless heights that we have never climbed, and countless depths that we have never fathomed. And if we are to have even this partial understanding of the lesson we must be prepared to give pains to it. I was deeply interested when I first went to Carrs Lane to examine Dr. Dale's copy of the Revised Version from which he read the lessons in his pulpit. It bore signs of the most diligent devotion. In difficult chapters the emphatic words were carefully marked, and parenthetical clauses and passages were clearly defined. Dr. Dale's making of an emphasis has sometimes been to me a revelation when I have read from his copy in the conduct of public worship. I mention this only to show what consecrated care

one great expositor gave to the reading of the Scriptures. It is not elocution that we need, at least not the kind of elocution which in past years was given to theological students for the ministry. That was an imprisonment in artificial bonds which, for the sake of a galvanized life, destroyed all sense of weight and dignity. No, what we need, in the first place, is to exalt the ministry of the lesson in public worship, to set ourselves in reverent relationship to it, and then to give all needful diligence to understanding it and transferring our understanding to the people. Let us magnify the reading of the Word. Let us defend it with suitable conditions. Let us deliver it from all distractions. Let us keep the doors closed. Let no latecomers be loitering about the aisles while its message is being given. Let it be received in quietness, and it shall become manifest that God's word is still a lamp unto men's feet and a light unto their paths.

And now, in pursuit of the one exalted purpose of glorifying God in our pulpit ministry, we shall give consecrated diligence to our common praise. Here again we are touching something which may be the abode of death or a fountain of resurrection-life. And here again we are turning to something to which many of us pay but slight and indifferent regard. And once again I am seeking to convey to you the urgent conviction that every item in the service carries its own effective significance, and that carelessness concerning any part will inevitably lower the temperature of the entire worship. I am perfectly sure that it is with the hymns as it is with the reading of the Scriptures; our heedlessness is punished by antagonisms which make it doubly difficult to reach our supreme end. Many of the hymns we sing are artificial. They are superficial and unreal. They frequently express desires that no one shares, and which no healthy, aspiring soul should ever wish to share. Some of our hymns are cloistral, even sepulchral, smelling of death, and are far removed from the actual ways of intercourse and the throbbing pulse of common need. The sentiment is often sickly and anaemic. It has no strength of penitence or ambition. It is languid, and weakly dreamy, more fitted for an afternoon in Lotus-land than for pilgrims who are battling their way to God. And yet these hymns are indifferently chosen, and we use and sing them with a detachment of spirit which makes our worship a musical pretence. The thing is hollow and devoid of meaning, and through the emptiness of this "preliminary" we lead our people to the truth of our message and hope that it will be received. It is a strangely unwise way, to prepare for spiritual receptiveness by a deadening formality which closes all the pores of the soul. Every artificiality in the service is an added barrier

between the soul and truth: every reality prepares the soul for the reception of the Lord. The hymn before the sermon has often aggravated the preacher's task.

There is another matter which I should like to mention in connection with our hymns. Many of the hymns are characterized by an extreme individualism which may make them unsuitable for common use in public worship. I know how singularly sweet and intimate may be the communion of the soul with our Lord. I know that no language can express the delicacy of the ties between the Lamb and His bride. And it is well that the soul, laden with the glorious burden of redeeming grace, should be able to sing its secret confidence and pour out the strains of its personal troth to the Lord. "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*!" But still I think that these hymns of intense individualism should be chosen with prayerful and scrupulous care. Public worship is not a means of grace wherein each may assert his own individuality and help himself from the common feast: it is a communion where each may help his brother to "the things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him." A congregation is not supposed to be a crowd of isolated units, each one intent upon a personal and private quest. The ideal is not that each individual should hustle and bustle for himself, stretching out his hand to touch the hem of Christ's garment, but that each should be tenderly solicitous of every other, and particularly mindful of those with "lame hands" who are timid and despondent even in the very presence of the great Physician. And so the ideal hymn in public worship is one in which we move together as a fellowship, bearing one another's sins, hearing one another's conquests, "weeping with them that weep, and rejoicing with them that rejoice."

In this wealth of widest sympathy we must select our hymns. There must be a hymn in which the sorrowful will lay his burden, and the joyful will help him to lift it. There must be a hymn for those who are "valiant for the truth," and the timid and the fearful may take courage while they sing it. There must be a hymn in which the newly-made bride shall see the sacred light of her own new day, and the newly-made widow will catch the beams of the eternal morn. There must be hymns in which old people and little children can meet together and see the beauty of the leaf that never withers, and the glory of the abiding spring. All this means that our hymns cannot be chosen at the last moment if they are to be vital factors in a living service. They will have to be diligently considered, and their content carefully weighed, and we shall have to estimate their possible in-

fluence upon the entire worship. Do you not feel the reasonableness of this, and the importance of it, if every hymn is to be a positive ministry in constraining the congregation to intimate fellowship with God?

But even now I have not done with the musical portion of our worship. I want to urge you to cultivate friendship and most intimate communion with your organist. Enlist his spirit in your own exalted purpose. Make him realise, by the fellowship of your deepest desires, that he is a fellow-labourer in the salvation of men to the glory of God. Let the music be redeemed from being a human entertainment, and let it become a divine revelation. Let it never be an end in itself but a means of grace, something to be forgotten in the dawning of something grander. Let it never be regarded as an exhibition of human cleverness but rather as a transmitter of spiritual blessings: never a terminus, but always a thoroughfare. And therefore take counsel with your organist. Tell him what you want to do next Sunday. Do not be shy about leading the conversation into the deeper things. Do not keep him in the outer courts: take him into the secret place. Tell him your purpose in reference to each particular hymn, and what influence you hope it will have upon the people. Tell him what you are going to preach about, and lead him into the very central road of your own desires. Tell him you are going in quest of the prodigal, or to comfort the mourner, or to rouse the careless, or to encourage the faint. Tell him what part of the vast realm of "the unsearchable riches" you will seek to unveil to your people, and let his eyes be filled with the glory which is holding yours. Take counsel as to how he can co-operate with you, and let there be two men on the same great errand. Let him consider what kind of organ voluntaries will best minister to your common purpose and prepare the hearts of the people for the vision of God. Let a tune be chosen from the standpoint of what will best disclose the secret wealth of a hymn and open the soul to its reception. Never let the anthem be an "unchartered libertine," playing its own pranks irrespective of the rest of the service,—at the best an interlude, at the worst an intolerable interruption and antagonism—but let the anthem be leagued to the dominant purpose, urging the soul in the one direction, and preparing "the way of the Lord." In all these simple suggestions I am offering you counsel of incalculable worth. A preacher and his organist, profoundly one in the spirit of the Lord Jesus, have inconceivable strength in the ministry of redemption.

And indeed what I have said about the organist I would say concerning everybody who has any office in the service of the sanctuary. Let it be your ambition to make them co-operate in the purpose that

possesses you. Your pulpit ministry is helped or hindered by everybody who has to deal with your congregation, even to the "doorkeeper in the house of the Lord." And, therefore, let your ushers know that they may be your fellow-labourers, not merely showing people to their seats, but by the spirit and manner of their service helping them near to God. Let every one of your helpers be on the inside of things, and in their very service worshipping God "in spirit and in truth."

Gentlemen, there is nothing petty or priggish in all this. A prig is a man who has never seen or has lost the august, and who is, therefore, swallowed up in his own conceit. I am seeking to depict a preacher who lives in the vision of the august, and who desires to lift into the splendour even the obscurest ministry of the sanctuary. There are portions of our services that are vagrant, unharnessed to the central purpose, and I want to recover their power to the direct mission of the salvation of men,—and it can only be done when the minister takes his fellow-workers into his counsels, and makes them at home in the secret desires of his own soul. We must cease to regard the sermon as the isolated sovereign of the service, and all other exercises as a retinue of subordinates. We must regard everything as of vital and sacred importance, and everything must enter the sanctuary clothed in strength and beauty.

And so with these mighty allies of prayer, and Scripture, and music, all pulsing with the power of the Holy Ghost, we shall give to a prepared people the message of the sermon. There are some questions about the sermon on which I am comparatively indifferent. Whether it shall be preached from a full manuscript or from notes, whether it shall be read, or delivered with greater detachment; these questions do not much concern me. Either method may be alive and effective if there be behind it a "live" man, real and glowing, fired with the passion of souls. Our people must realise that we are bent on serious business, that there is a deep, keen quest in our preaching, a sleepless and a deathless quest. They must feel in the sermon the presence of "the hound of heaven," tracking the soul in its most secret ways, following it in the ministry of salvation, to win it from death to life, from life to more abundant life, "from grace to grace," "from strength to strength," "from glory to glory."

And in all our preaching we must preach for verdicts. We must present our case, we must seek a verdict, and we must ask for immediate execution of the verdict. We are not in the pulpit to please the fancy. We are not there even to inform the mind, or to disturb the emotions, or to sway the judgment. These are only preparatives along the jour-

ney. Our ultimate object is to move the will, to set it in another course, to increase its pace, and to make it sing in "the ways of God's commandments." Yes, we are there to bring the wills of men into tune with the will of God, in order that God's statutes may become their songs. It is a blessed calling, frowning with difficulty, beset with disappointments, but its real rewards are "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." There is no joy on earth comparable to his who has gone out with the great Shepherd, striding over the exposed mountain, and through deep valleys of dark shadow, seeking His sheep that was lost: no joy, I say, comparable to his when the sheep is found, and the Shepherd lays it on His shoulder rejoicing, and carries it home to the fold. "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost!" And every one who has shared in the toil of the seeking shall also share in the joy of the finding—"Partaker of the sufferings" he shall also be "partaker of the glory." He shall assuredly "enter into the joy" of his Lord.













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